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THE ESSENTIALS OF
CHRISTIANITY

REV. HENRY C. SHELDON, D.D.

THE ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY

BY

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and Other Essays in Philosophy and Religion," etc.



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THE ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY. I

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TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE
WHO HAVE AN AMBITION TO EXAMINE THE
 GROUNDS OF A HIGH APPRECIATION OF
CHRISTIANITY, AND OF AN EARNEST DEVOTION
TO THE CAUSE OF ITS PROPAGATION IN THE WORLD,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE

This book was designed for young people sufficiently advanced to understand, without serious difficulty, discussions in religion and theology embodied in non-technical phraseology. Indeed, in its primary form the treatise consisted of lectures given to successive classes of college students. Recently these have been revised and enlarged. It is our hope that intelligent laymen generally will find the book well adjusted to their antecedents and needs.

The apologetic basis of the book may appear somewhat novel. It is believed, however, that it will invite no unfavorable judgment, since the prominence assigned to the point of view of the comparative study of religions is in line with a widely-felt demand of our age.

The thanks of the author are due to the Methodist Book Concern for permission to use a number of paragraphs which in substance or form approximate to passages con-

tained in his larger and very differently planned work, designed more especially for professional students of theology, and entitled "System of Christian Doctrine."

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**THE ESSENTIALS OF
CHRISTIANITY**

THE ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I: CHRISTIANITY AS RELATED TO OTHER RELIGIONS

I: Religion Defined and Shown to Be Native to Man

Defined as to its subjective aspect, Religion is belief in a Higher Power, a sense of dependence upon such a Power and an inward attitude toward it of homage or worship. Regarded objectively, religion consists in actions, customs, and institutions which give manifestation to the belief in the Higher Power, to the sense of dependence, and to the attitude of worship. The two aspects united give the rounded view of what is meant by religion.

A substitute for such a definition as the foregoing has recently had some currency. Proceeding from a very specific standpoint certain writers prefer to define religion as simply the recognition and pursuit of social values. In so

doing they undoubtedly give expression to no mean element of truth; at least, if the Higher Power is construed as the effective head and center of social relations. In its terms, however, the given definition does not necessarily include that range of meaning. It is, therefore, too vague, not to say too narrow, to adequately set forth the idea which men almost universally have expressed under the name of religion.

It is not too much to say that religion is the common property of the race. Man is constitutionally a religious being. One and another so-called religious function may indeed be scarcely more than an external attachment in the case of this or that individual. But religion in general is no external attachment, no artificial adjunct to the life of mankind. It has a deep and permanent spring in the fundamental characteristics and relations of men. Back of all the artificial and arbitrary features which may be pointed out in various systems of religion we are obliged to affirm a native religiousness.

Christianity, then, has this in common with other religions, that it is a manifestation of man's native bent to religion. Whatever superiority it may rightfully claim, it is far from

requiring utter disparagement of other religions. The devoted disciple of Christianity is free to recognize in all religions, even in the lowest and poorest, an element of worth. To a greater or less extent they publish man's upward striving and his inalienable sense of connection with higher powers. They are not mere falsities, not mere eccentricities, not mere products of fraud and caprice. A profound sentiment, and one prophetic of a high destiny for man, is discoverable through all the network of their prescriptions and practices, crude and grotesque as these may have been in many instances.

That religion is no chance product in the world, but has rather a perennial source in the depths of human nature itself, is a legitimate induction from the record of history. It is attested, in the first place, by the enormous bulk of religious facts and by the high proportion which these bear to the known works and experiences of the race. One can hardly place his hand upon history anywhere without coming into contact with memorials of religion. They abound in the literature of the world. They are found in the earliest poetry of the Orient as well as in the latest of the Occident. They claim a large place in the achievements

of the sculpture and architecture of every age. The spade of the archæologist uncovers them wherever it brings to light any vestiges of buried civilizations. Philology finds them imbedded in the languages of the world as far back as it can trace human speech toward its primitive source. In short, the further investigation is pushed the more vivid becomes the impression of the force with which religion has wrought as a motive power among men. An eminent writer speaks soberly when he says: "It is the largest and most ubiquitous fact connected with the existence of mankind upon earth."¹

The truth that religion is rooted in man's nature is attested not merely by the bulk of religious facts that have been brought to view, but also by lack of a single authentic specimen of a tribe wholly destitute of religion. It is not a little suggestive that no one would think of looking for such a tribe except among men most deeply debased. Evidently a group of men thus conditioned, even if they should be found entirely destitute of religion, would afford no valid proof against the conclusion that human nature provides for religion. As pointing to a standing below the plane of true man-

¹ John Fiske, "Through Nature to God," p. 189.

hood, the religious deficit in them would no more illustrate what is characteristic of man, than does the social deficit in men who flee from society and seek absolute isolation from all their fellows. But it is not necessary to emphasize this point. The tribe without religion has not been found. Supposed examples have failed to endure close scrutiny. It has been discovered that the religion of the savage has been disguised by the poverty and strangeness of his dialect, or hidden by his suspicion and reticence. As has been remarked by a very painstaking investigator of the subject, "Even with much time, and care, and knowledge of language, it is not always easy to elicit from savages the details of their theology. They try to hide from the prying and contemptuous foreigner their worship of gods who seem to shrink, like their worshipers, before the white man and his mightier Deity."² That religion was born with man and has been the constant possession of mankind seems to be the common verdict of the great majority of eminent students of religious history and racial peculiarities. Max Müller, Tylor, Ratzel, Quatrefages, Tiele, Waitz, Gerland, Peschel, and Roskoff represent the most competent scholarship of

² E. B. Tylor, "Primitive Culture," I, 382.

recent times in their expression of the conviction that no races of men can be named which are wholly destitute of religion.³

The fact that religion is founded in human nature may be regarded, once more, as evidenced by the poor success of various attempts to explain religious phenomena on any other basis. One of the most superficial of these is that which refers all to priestcraft. Doubtless many things in the various religions of the world have been due to the devices of priests. But what has gained currency for their devices? Evidently if they had not had religious people to deal with they could not have effectually controlled their subjects in the name of religion. To suppose a group of men to be able to fasten upon the mass of their fellows, age after age, something purely arbitrary, or without correspondence to inborn needs, is to suppose the incredible. The power of priesthoods, as a factor within the circle of religious beliefs and practices, may have been great; nevertheless, it is obvious to a judicial mind that religion as an interior bent of men has been the greater power, which explains the existence of priesthoods, as well as the appear-

³ Compare F. B. Jevons, "Introduction to the History of Religion"; G. T. Ladd, "The Philosophy of Religion"; C. H. Toy, "Introduction to the History of Religions."

ance of various factors and features of religious systems.

A similar line of remark applies to the supposition that fear, viewed as a non-religious feeling, drove men into religion; that being baffled and bruised by the forces of nature, they had recourse to imaginary safeguards. A formula for this theory was given by the Roman writer Statius in the words *Primus in orbe timor deos fecit*. Now it is to be conceded that fear did work as an incentive and was influential in determining some points of religious practice. But, after all, it was only the partial and subordinate cause. Fear of natural evils has in itself no power to disclose the supernatural or divine and to impart a vital sense of relationship thereto. Supposing an already existing bent to recognize a higher power, then we can see that fear may increase the urgency of appeals in that direction; but we do not see that fear can create the sense of the presence and agency of such a power. Moreover, fear working by itself would make the content of religion to consist solely of means of shelter against unfriendly and malignant powers. But religion has always had a different content from that. It has given place to friendly powers and to the thought of sat-

isfaction in fellowship with them. If we may trust the verdict of prominent investigators, this was the case with religion from the start; for they conclude that primitive sacrifices were not so much rites of expiation as rites of fellowship with the object of worship.

Other non-religious causes, which have been appealed to as explaining the rise of religion, must in all sobriety be pronounced equally inadequate. Take for instance the lively impression of natural objects. Undoubtedly it has had much to do in determining the specific direction of the religious bent. Very likely in all the advanced stages of culture it has been a potent force in shaping religious manifestations. But it is equally true that natural objects would never have become religious objects, had it not been for the working of religious needs and impulses. Only the powerful stimulus coming from this source could create and sustain the disposition to translate the objects of sense into symbols and vehicles of the transcendent or divine.

Take, again, the experience of dreams and apparitions. It is not at all incredible that events of this kind have furnished men with objects of religious contemplation, as tending

to foster belief in spirits, whether ancestral or non-human. This species of belief, however, would never have furnished the basis for a persistent conviction of vital connection with and obligation toward intangible powers, but for needs and tendencies deeply imbedded in the nature of men. It is important to note that the particular direction of a current is one thing, while the perennial source of the current is quite another thing. Many causes may have shaped the manifestation of religion. The potent cause urging to manifestation so universally and persistently cannot be regarded as anything less than the intrinsic needs and tendencies of the human spirit.

What has been said thus far simply invites to an attitude of appreciative consideration of all religions. If it involves nothing in favor of the special claims of Christianity, it certainly involves nothing adverse to those claims. The fact that man is so fundamentally a religious being that, generally speaking, his nature impels under all conditions to some form of religious faith and practice, is just the kind of basis that Christianity requires to justify its anticipation of world-wide victory. Constitutional indifference to religion might be a fatal barrier to progress; with the opposition of men

who, in the long run, cannot get along without a religion, it may hope to wrestle successfully. The ineradicable longing for religious satisfaction, under such conditions of the world as provide for the free contact of one religion with another, may be expected to bring men—or at least the greater portion of them—ultimately to the religion which most adequately meets the longing, and is most able to meet it under advanced stages of culture.

*II: The Tests which Christianity Must Meet in
Order to Establish Its Claim to Universality
and Finality*

If the Christian religion is to be made to appear not simply as a religion among religions, but as the religion fitted to become universal and ultimate, grounds for a rational faith in the following propositions need to be afforded: (1) Man, as being constitutionally a religious being, must in the long run have a religion. (2) Christianity is distinctly superior to any other historic religion. (3) The essential truths and spirit of Christianity are so high and perfect that there is no real occasion to harbor the thought of their being improved upon.

To rest the case of Christianity upon the establishment of these three propositions is not merely the dictate of convenience but of right reason as well. What need is there to prove anything more? If men must have a religion, if Christianity meets the religious needs of humanity better than any other historic system, and is moreover so high and perfect in its characteristic truths and spirit that no chance for surpassing them is to be recognized, then unmistakably its claim to universality and finality is solidly based. Further proofs can be waived as unnecessary. There is no imperative demand, for example, to establish a detailed perfection of the Bible. It is enough to know that the Bible excels every other compendium of sacred writings, and records a revelation which supplies in its aggregate result a standard too pure and lofty to be transcended. No more is it requisite to show that the history of so-called Christian peoples has been free from great evils and abuses. It is to be remembered that a people truly Christian in anything like its whole extent has never yet been seen on the face of the earth; that Christianity has had to contend against the force of human selfishness, passion, and appetite, and therefore has been only imperfectly exempli-

fied in the history of any nation. Impossibilities are not to be asked of any religion. The best religion conceivable cannot be required to banish in short order all evil from human society, made up as that society is of wayward free agents. What can reasonably be asked of it is, that it should meet the evil with uncompromising opposition, have an inexhaustible power to vitalize the consciences of its votaries, and thus be able to work progressively toward the reign of practical righteousness in all the relations of men.

Of the three propositions mentioned as needing to be established the first has been confirmed by evidences which, we judge, the thoughtful reader will pronounce satisfactory. To the establishment of the second and third propositions the entire line of thought in this treatise will be tributary. That task therefore will not be formally undertaken in this connection. It will be advisable, however, before proceeding further, to furnish a basis for a comparison of Christianity with the non-Christian religions by giving a brief sketch of the main characteristics of the latter. Thus we shall be in condition, as the essential content of Christianity is unfolded in successive chapters, to see the justification of the second propo-

tion, and also be ready with better intelligence to turn our thought to the concluding proposition. Direct attention will be given to these subjects in the concluding chapter.

III: Religions which May Be Supposed to Compete with Christianity—Their Merits and Their Defects

As regards religions which have perished from the world it would be a superfluous task to compare Christianity with them. Their inability to maintain themselves is an indication of unfitness for permanent subsistence, and must stand against them till a resurrection to vitality and efficiency has been achieved. Approximately the same may be said of a religion which has descended from its ancient eminence, and been left for a long period with a meager band of followers. This description applies to the Zoroastrian religion, which retains but a handful of adherents in its ancient Persian home and is mainly represented by the Parsis of India, numbering probably less than one hundred thousand.

Corresponding to the contrast between the snow-capped mountains and the sand-wastes of the land which served as its early theater,

Zoroastrianism was a religion largely dominated by a sense of antagonisms. In truth it incorporated a dualistic feature in placing both good and evil back of the world and representing them as partners in its formation. This point of view, as enforcing the need of continuous struggle in order to bring victory to the side of the powers of light and goodness, as opposed to those of darkness and malignity, gave a certain cast of earnestness to the old Persian religion. It must be affirmed, however, that the dualism incorporated with this religion is not adapted permanently to satisfy either thought or feeling. To divide the creative efficiency back of the world into antagonistic portions offends against the philosophical demand for unity, and stands in the way of a serene faith in providence. The biblical picture of a good God making a good world, into which moral evil comes only by creaturely lapse, is not only more cheerful than the dualistic representation; it affords also a decidedly more consistent basis for moral effort and religious faith. Evil gets too much dignity when it is made to share the throne of the world. No doubt Zoroastrianism makes a certain amend for its dualistic representation of the beginning of things, in that it pictures the final tri-

umph of the good deity. But this outcome is rather dictated by a brave hope than by a logical induction. If evil coexisted with the good in the beginning, it is not easy to provide a well-founded hope for its ultimate displacement. Other defects in Zoroastrianism might be specified, the most noticeable perhaps being the extent to which it fenced around the lives of men with arbitrary rules in its extravagant effort to guard the sanctity of the pure elements, fire, water, and earth.

Of living religions not more than four have a position and content which makes it worth while to compare them with Christianity. These are Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism. That there are elements of worth in each of these religions will not be denied by any fair-minded investigator.

If we turn to the first named, we find very commendable features, especially on the side of its ethical code. Such virtues as reverence, moderation, sincerity, and gentleness are worthily inculcated. The following are characteristic maxims: "It is virtue that moves heaven: there is no distance to which it does not reach. Pride brings loss and humility re-

ceives increase.”⁴ “Do not cherish anger against the obstinate and dislike them. Seek not every quality in one individual. You must have patience, and you will be successful; have forbearance and your virtue will be great.”⁵ “Always and in everything there should be reverence. Pride should not be indulged; the will should not be gratified to the full; pleasure should not be carried to excess. . . . Do not seek for victory in small contentions; do not seek for more than your share.”⁶

With its many excellencies the Confucian ethics combines some features which invite criticism, at least from the viewpoint of Christianity. There is some reason, for instance, to charge it with overdoing the very necessary stress upon the obligation of children to parents. Unquestionably this is a high and holy obligation, but in centering the emphasis upon it a certain hazard is incurred of making too little account of those great obligations of the individual soul to itself and to God which may perchance come into competition with parental wishes and ancestral models. Again, Confucianism shares a very common fault of the antique world in its relative disparagement of

⁴ The Shu-King, Part II, book II § 3.

⁵ The Shu-King, Part V, book XXI, § 3.

⁶ The Li-ki, Book I, sect. I, part I.

women. Under its régime woman attains indeed to high honor as the mother of sons, but not in other relations. Her dignity suffers very appreciable abridgment from the prerogative of husbands in the matter of divorce and of concubinage. It may be noticed also that Confucius stood in contrast with the founder of Christianity in discrediting the obligation to exercise good-will and love toward's one's enemies. At this point he fell below the plane of his contemporary Lao-tse.

The great weakness of Confucianism lies in its lack of any adequate and vitalizing conception of God. In the writings of the sage himself the Supreme Being, recognized in early Chinese thinking under the vague title of "Heaven," appears only as an indistinct object of belief. Some expositors have even questioned whether in the use of Confucius the title stood for a personal subject. Probably, however, there was no positive intention to deny personality. But still the thought of God was left in great indefiniteness. Nor has Confucianism in its subsequent history transcended this relatively empty and powerless notion of Deity. To the mass of its adherents the Supreme Being is the far-off God, a being respected in certain rites periodically celebrated

by the emperor or highest exponent of the state, but not an object of universal and customary worship. It is to spirits, whether ancestral or non-human, that Confucianists in general are expected to pay most of the homage which they have to offer. The energizing motive which comes from a vital apprehension of the living God is not native to Confucianism. Its own votaries have in fact, to a conspicuous degree, furnished a practical acknowledgment of its deficit on the religious side, in that they have sought satisfaction for their religious needs by borrowing from Buddhism or Taoism.

Buddhism, not less than Confucianism, earns appreciation on the score of golden maxims in its ethical teaching. The former indeed appeals more cogently than the latter to the hearts of men through the element of sympathy and humanitarianism with which, in its original form at least, it was richly endowed. Gautama, the Buddha, or "enlightened one," was in temper a kind of Saint Francis, living in the sixth century before the Christian era (560-480). He did not, it is true, partake of the mystical devotion so deeply characteristic of the Italian philanthropist; but his heart overflowed with the same loving compassion.

Profoundly impressed with the miseries of human existence, he sought out for himself the way of escape, and then made it his life work to enlighten his fellow men respecting this way. Whatever may be thought of his total conception of salvation, it must be granted that his teaching embraced elements of very considerable worth. He ran clear of the exaggerated ceremonialism and sacerdotalism with which India had begun to be burdened. He emphasized the responsibility of the individual for effecting his own emancipation. He strongly enforced the demand for self-control and self-discipline. He fostered the spirit of tolerance and taught the duty of universal benevolence and gentleness. This duty could hardly be put more strongly than it is in various Buddhist texts. Of the one who is in the true way it is affirmed, "He lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of pity, sympathy, and equanimity, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world above, below, around, and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of pity, sympathy, and equanimity, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure." ⁷ A still more intense ex-

⁷ *Tevigga Sutta*, chap. iii.

pression of the obligation of universal goodwill appears in the following: "As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, her only child, so also let everyone cultivate a boundless friendly mind towards all beings."⁸

On the other hand, Buddhism viewed as a religious system exhibits very pronounced defects. In the first place, as originally promulgated, it fell far short of doing justice to the thought of God. Though it may have mentioned supernatural beings, it postulated for them no practical relation to men. They appear as of no more account than the celestial ghosts to which Epicureanism gave a verbal acknowledgment. No creative function was assigned to them, they were included in the sphere of the changeable, and in occasional texts were unfavorably compared with the man who has attained the stage of enlightenment. But so great a stretch of negation could not long survive. Buddhists, no more than other men, were able permanently to quench the sense of dependence and the impulse to worship. The historic Buddha himself was turned into a veritable god, and functions co-extensive with the universe were assigned to

⁸ The Sutta-Nipāta. Mettasutta.

him. Potential or prospective Buddhas in the heavenly sphere were recognized as possessed of divine rank. This development in Buddhist belief was especially characteristic of the Mahayana teaching, which had much currency in India by the close of the first Christian century, and gave the type very largely to northern Buddhism.

In the second place, Buddhism is subject to criticism as providing an imperfect ground for the consciousness of sin. Its stress is upon pain rather than upon sin proper. The problem with which it deals is not so much, how to eliminate moral contamination, as how to get release from suffering, how to escape from the weary round of transmigrations and the entail of misery which passes over from one incarnation to another and threatens to be perpetual. Detachment from the ever-whirling wheel of changeful being and entrance into rest is the consummation on which it lays the maximum stress. That it should fail of a proportionate emphasis on the demerit of sin was in a way dictated by the scanty deference which it paid at the start to the thought of God. A vital recognition of the holy and all-seeing One, who cannot look upon sin with allowance,

is a logical antecedent of a proper impression of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Again, Buddhism is chargeable with a conspicuous breach of consistency. According to its theory there is no abiding substance, ceaseless flux being characteristic of everything. What is spoken of as human personality is a mere complex, subsisting by the juxtaposition of its constituents, the so-called *skandhas*. As death sunders the constituents and breaks up the complex, the natural inference would be that personal subsistence does not continue beyond this life. Yet Buddhism often speaks as though it were the same subject which, failing to quench desire in this life, must be reincarnated and bear in another form the evil inseparable from desire. A sort of intellectual sleight of hand seems to be practiced at this point. It is as though a candle in expiring should ignite a second candle, and this second candle should then be identified with the preceding. To identify the subject of embodied life, which is dissolved in death, with the succeeding subject is quite arbitrary. But if the identity of the two is denied, an inquiry evidently arises as to the justice of loading on to the new subject the debt of the old, and of re-

quiring the former through a life of pain to work off the entail.

Once more the moral ideal of Buddhism is marred by undeniable imperfections. It runs into oneness both in the direction of asceticism and of quietism. The society founded by Gautama was a monastic society, and, while provision was made for a lay wing, the implication of the Buddhistic teaching was, that to reach the ideal character and to gain a place in the rank of "wise men" belongs only to monks. Gautama himself is credited with placing these words upon the lips of the believer: "Full of hindrances is household life, a path defiled by passion: free as the air is the life of him who has renounced all worldly things. How difficult is it for the man who dwells at home to live the higher life in all its fullness, in all its purity, in all its bright perfection! Let me then cut off my hair and beard, let me clothe myself in the orange-colored robes, and let me go forth from a household life into the homeless state!"⁹

On the side of quietism the Buddhistic ideal is decidedly radical. It emphasizes the need of a total suppression of desire and aspiration, setting this forth indeed as the supreme obliga-

⁹ *Tevigga Sutta*, § 47.

tion and achievement. Only thus, it is contended, can the bond to rebirth be broken and the chain of miserable existence be brought to an end; only thus can the deep calm, the perfect rest of *nirvana* be attained. In more than one text the reaching of the goal in *nirvana* seems to imply a veritable extinction of the self. Thus we read: "All the Buddhas of the past ages, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, by their wisdom enlightening the world, have all gone out as a lamp. All the Buddhas yet to come will perish in the same way."¹⁰ The sage, "after having revealed perfect enlightenment and led many kotis of beings to perfect rest, himself will be extinguished like a lamp when the oil is exhausted."¹¹ Statements like these may assign a more emphatic meaning to *nirvana* than has been universally, or even in a majority of instances, characteristic of Buddhistic thinking, especially in the northern regions. But it is undeniable that in its general tenor Buddhism has given great prominence to the idea of a passionless existence, a state in which all desire and effort are quenched. And herein it has exposed itself to a double criticism. On the one hand the legitimacy of its assumption that

¹⁰ Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King, Kiouen v, Varga 24.

¹¹ Saddharma-Pundarika xiii, 72.

the highest consummation lies in passivity or quiescence may properly be challenged. To suppose a consummation of that order to be the highest is to suppose emptiness and poverty of spirit to be superior to fullness and wealth. Not in the suppression of desire and activity, but rather in their subordination to the ends dictated by love and righteousness, the highest blessedness and glory of the human spirit are realized. On the other hand, the Buddhistic teaching is chargeable with a conspicuous inconsistency. To suppress desire is to suppress benevolent interest in one's fellows. How then can both the suppression of the one and the exercise of the other be obligatory? In the inculcation of the former duty Buddhistic teaching sets forth this precept: "Let no man love anything: loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing, and hate nothing, have no fetters."¹² At the same time, as has been observed, the Buddhistic precepts relative to universal sympathy and benevolence are expressed in the very strongest terms. Here is an appearance of contradiction which no ordinary wit can overcome. If perfect apathy is permissible or essential, universal

¹² Dhammapada, xvi.

sympathy and good-will seem logically to be no necessary part of the ideal for man.

Hinduism, as the dominant religion of India in the present is called, had its central antecedent in the Vedic-Brahmanical religion. With a certain degree of propriety it might be styled Neo-Brahmanism. This term, however, unless a broad meaning is put into its first member, does not adequately indicate the composite character of Hinduism. By a scheme of far-reaching accommodation Brahmanism has provided a place for almost everything that has been accepted by the people of India in the name of religion. "It has opened its doors to all comers on the two conditions of admitting the spiritual supremacy of the Brahmins and conforming to certain caste rules about food, intermarriage, and professional pursuits. In this manner it has adopted much of the fetishism of the Negrito aborigines of India; it has stooped to the practices of the various hill tribes, and has not scrupled to encourage the adoration of the fish, the boar, the serpent, rocks, stones, and trees; it has borrowed ideas from the various cults of the Dravidian races, and it may even owe something to Christianity." ¹³ Hinduism has also derived

¹³ Monier Williams, "Hinduism," pp. 85, 86.

not a little from Buddhism. The influence of the latter has been made apparent in an approximate abolition of animal sacrifices, in an enlarged stress upon the notion of transmigration, and in a tendency to award a central place in religion to incarnated and humanized divinities.

In the above description of Hinduism grounds of criticism have already been disclosed. Doubtless in the enormous collection of its sacred writings a considerable amount of genuine treasure is discoverable. The element of subtle speculation is largely exemplified, and most excellent maxims, ethical and religious, appear in one connection or another. But even the most charitable judgment must rate the offsetting features as of very serious consequence.

It is evident, first of all, that in Hinduism eclecticism has been carried well-nigh to a bewildering extreme. Unity has been mutilated, not to say destroyed, by the combination of a multitude of incongruous factors. The question may be raised, in truth, whether Hinduism can properly be styled a religion; whether it is not rather to be named a collection of loosely conjoined and intermingled religions.

In the second place, Hinduism, in so far as

it is built upon Brahmanism, rests upon a pantheistic basis. The Vedanta philosophy was the orthodox philosophy of Brahmanism, and that philosophy represented as radical a form of pantheism as ever had currency, teaching that the whole world of concrete being is an illusion, that there is only one real self, namely Brahman, and that the true destiny of what we esteem to be the individual soul is identification with this one self. In a text of the Upanishads we read: "As the flowing rivers disappear in the sea, losing their name and form, thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine Person who is greater than the great. . . . He who knows that highest Brahman becomes even Brahman."¹⁴ Upon this pantheistic basis Hinduism rears the superstructure of a bizarre and luxuriant polytheism. To one, therefore, who is deeply conscious of the shortcomings of both pantheism and polytheism, it offers very scanty claims to credence.

Again the ethical teaching of Hinduism is in great need of revision and pruning. There are maxims in the old Brahmanical writings in which the efficacy of ceremonies is lauded to an extent which is decidedly compromising to

¹⁴ Mundaka-Upanishad.

ethical demands. The same writings, it is true, contain some texts of an opposite tenor, but the presence of the latter does not fully atone for the misleading doctrine incorporated with the former. In later writings also, to which Hinduism pays respect, the teaching is of a mixed character in its bearing upon the interests of morality. This is especially true of the Tantras, a class of writings among the least reputable in the whole range of the sacred literature of Hinduism.

Finally, Hinduism, in conserving very largely the Brahmanical caste system, has given its sanction to one of the most artificial and despotic schemes of social organization that was ever invented. Proceeding from a mythical assumption of the intrinsic inequalities of men, fostered by overweening sacerdotal pride and ambition, and raising barriers where nature never placed them, this iron-clad system of division and restriction plainly lies quite outside the possibility of rational justification.

Mohammedanism earns respect on several grounds. It makes a very earnest protest against all polytheistic subdivision of the divine. It gives a majestic picture of divine sovereignty. It asserts very strongly man's

responsibility to God, and lays profound stress on the duty of unqualified surrender to the divine will. In at least the earlier part of his career Mohammed was undoubtedly a sincere reformer, who believed that the convictions burning in his heart were from above.

On the other hand there are several grounds of an unfavorable estimate of Mohammedanism. In the first place, it has but slight claim to originality. "There is nothing original in the Koran," says Pfeiderer, "beyond the statement of the mission of Mohammed."¹⁵ This may be putting the case rather strongly, but it is quite evident to the candid investigator that Mohammed drew, at second hand, a very considerable portion of his materials from Judaism and Christianity, especially the former. That he did not derive his information directly from the oracles of either is made glaringly apparent by misconceptions and perversions in various passages of the Koran.

Again Mohammedanism is subject to criticism on the score of a one-sided representation of God. It portrays Him predominantly as the all-powerful sovereign. No doubt there are recurring references in the Koran to the mercy of God, and a mention of His readiness

¹⁵ "Philosophy of Religion," iii, 179.

to forgive those who turn from their evil ways is not wanting. But the stereotyped phrases employed in these lines give no vital impression of a God who is deeply concerned at heart to reach and to save the lost, and they are offset by a multitude of expressions which convey a contrary suggestion. What else is it than arbitrary almighty will that is sketched in such sentences as the following? "Verily those who misbelieve, it is the same to them if ye warn them, or if ye warn them not, they will not believe. God has set a seal upon their hearts and on their hearing; and on their eyes is dimness."¹⁶ "Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He expands his breast to Islam; but whomsoever He wishes to lead astray He makes his breast tight and straight; thus God sets His horror on those who do not believe."¹⁷ "We have created for hell many of the ginn and of mankind."¹⁸ "God leads whom He will astray and guides whom he will."¹⁹ "Dost thou not see that we have sent the devils against the misbelievers to drive them on to sin."²⁰ "He pardons whom He pleases and torments whom He pleases."²¹ Sen-

¹⁶ Koran, Sura ii, 5, Palmer's translation.

¹⁷ vii, 125.

¹⁸ vii, 178.

¹⁹ xiv, 4.

²⁰ xix, 86.

²¹ xlviii, 14.

tences of like tenor, to the number of half a hundred, could be cited from the Koran; and to add to the grimness of the picture which is given of an autocratic Deity more than a hundred pronouncements of hell torments against the unbelieving and disobedient are distributed through the pages of the same authoritative book. Indeed, that competent student of Mohammedanism, D. B. Macdonald, seems to speak with very fair warrant when he says: "Men are the slaves of Allah, His absolute property to do with as He wills."²²

Some modification of this portrayal of the divine disposition and attitude may have occurred in outcroppings of Mohammedan mysticism, especially in the form of Sufism, the headquarters of which were located in Persia. But in its affiliation with pantheism, this type of Mohammedanism has its own dubious features, and besides can assert no claim to orthodoxy as against the tenor of the professedly infallible Koran.

A predominant stress upon unsparing sovereignty naturally supports the inclination of the ardent devotee to appeal to the sword. It is no cause for surprise, therefore, to find in the Koran passages like the following: "When

²² "The Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam," p. 222. Compare E. W. Hopkins, "History of Religions," p. 460.

ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter among them; and bind them in bonds, and either give them a free dismissal afterwards, or exact a ransom until the war shall have laid down its arms. Verily if God pleased He could take vengeance on them without your assistance; but He commandeth you to fight His battles, that He may prove the one of you by the other. And as to those who fight in defense of God's true religion, God will not suffer their works to perish. He will lead them and dispose their hearts aright; and He will lead them into paradise." ²³ Under modern conditions Mohammedan jurisprudence may have set bounds to the prerogative to declare a "holy war," an armed crusade against unbelievers,²⁴ but it is quite undeniable that if Mohammedan zealots should desire an excuse for unsheathing the sword against an unbelieving nation, they would not need to search the Koran with extra care in order to find agreeable texts.

It is to be charged still further against Mohammedanism, that it falls below the standard of an ideal religion in being to so large a de-

²³ xlvii, 4-7, Sale's translation.

²⁴ Macdonald, "Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory," pp. 55, 56.

gree a religion of positive precepts rather than one of principles, and also by making no clear distinction between the religious and civil domains. In virtue of these characteristics it may have a certain efficiency in training rude nations; but it pays heavily for any such advantage in the extent to which it puts obstructions in the way of enlightened progress. At one point or another it gives the sanction of what is proclaimed to be an infallible revelation to distinctive features of an imperfect civilization. Polygamy, facility of divorce, and license for concubinage, with all the disparagement of woman's dignity which they involve, have unequivocal sanctions in the Koran. Hence liberal Mohammedans, who, so far as their own preferences are concerned might wish to modify unworthy customs, are held back from any vigorous and persistent effort at reform.

Once more, Mohammedanism exposes itself to adverse comment by its materialistic representations of future reward. More than one passage in the Koran pictures the heavenly estate in thoroughly sensuous, not to say sensual terms, and conveys the impression that the prize to be looked for by the believer is a specially extensive and richly furnished

harem. No part in this establishment, it may be noted, is assigned to women of earthly antecedents. This did not follow from any doubt in the mind of the Arabian prophet about the title of women to immortality. He simply judged that he could most effectively stimulate the hopes of the men who followed his standard by picturing as a prominent factor in their coming felicity groups of celestial maidens.

In reviewing these systems of religion we have made it a point to consider only such features as clearly belong to them, and to avoid emphasizing things which may be rated as corrupting additions. To deal fairly with Christianity the same procedure must, of course, be observed in reviewing the subject-matter. It is to be judged by its essential contents, and not by perversions and accretions which contradict or obscure its proper essence. Taken in this sense it may confidently invite comparison with any religion which appeals to human faith. There is no need to disparage the systems which we have just sketched. The fair-minded Christian apologist will admit their merits. His contention will be simply, that Christianity matches their excellences, and by

its rounded system of truth escapes the serious defects by which each one of them is marred. We hope to give credibility to this proposition in the following chapters and especially in the chapter which closes this treatise.

CHAPTER II: CHRISTIANITY AS RELATED TO A HISTORICAL BASIS AND TO WRITTEN ORACLES

I: The Need of a Historical Basis for a Successful Religion.

Mere speculation cannot create a living and thriving religion. Philosophy may help to undermine a given religion, or may furnish concepts for the doctrinal construction carried on within a given religion; but it takes something besides philosophy to found a religion which is able to claim a right of way in the world. The philosophers of Greece took away from the cultured some of the props to their faith in the old polytheism of the country; not one of them, however, gave a religion to the Greeks. The genius of a Plato and of an Aristotle did not suffice for that. They had, indeed, too much wisdom to attempt to make a religion out of a bundle of philosophical tenets.

Such experiments as have been made with

abstract religions, or with religions put together by mere intellectual industry in formulating and arranging truths, have fallen far short of the expectations of their authors. This was conspicuously the case with the Theophilanthropists, who figured in the era of the French Revolution. It was their plan, disowning special historical antecedents, to bring together good teachings from all accessible sources, and to compound them into a rational and consistent system. As a matter of fact they selected very excellent maxims. But what were they able to accomplish with their fine compilation? Next to nothing. There was no power in it to capture and to hold men. Much the same results have attended similar experiments in more recent years, as may be seen by consulting the records of "Free Religious Associations" and "Theistic Societies."

The trouble with a religion manufactured simply by intellectual industry in gathering, formulating, and combining truths, is that it does not fit the human subject. In almost all relations man is much more than pure intellect. The demands of his emotional life are ever coming to the front. A religion, therefore, that is fitted to maintain a permanent hold upon him must give good heed to these demands. It

must have food for the heart. It must do much more than offer a well-devised definition of the divine; it must furnish apprehensible tokens that the divine is with man for his enrichment and blessing.

This is as much as saying that, in order to make effective connections with any considerable portion of the race, a religion must utilize a historic process. Facts, or supposed facts, concrete representations of how a supereminent being has come into communication with man, and wrought within the sphere of his life, constitute the most apprehensible tokens of the higher power that can be furnished. They appeal to the imagination, awaken feeling, and enkindle the hope of fellowship to a degree that is quite beyond the competency of abstract statements. A religion that can boast of any strength and permanency of life must be able to point to a sacred history. Of course, a sacred history which serves to embody religious conceptions and to insure to them practical vitality may have near to its beginning a meager content. Even such a content may be at that stage very serviceable as furnishing points of support whereby the incipient religious faith and practice may gain a foothold in the world. The large and wealthy content,

however, must be reached in due season if a victorious religion is to result.

The religion adapted to win the largest and most permanent influence is the one whose sacred history has the richest content, and the content also which is best able to meet the tests of criticism which sooner or later are sure to be applied. Legend being taken in good faith as history may fulfill the office of history for a time by giving concrete representations of religious conceptions; but it cannot do so forever. This is not saying that a religion is necessarily discredited by the discovery that legend has a place in its oracles; for the oracles may contain such high values that the element of legend shall detract little from them, even if it be rated as having no value in itself, which is not necessarily the case. The true statement is that legend must not have a controlling place, that in the trend and principal items of its sacred history a religion adapted to permanency must rest upon facts.

II: The Largeness of the Historical Basis of Christianity

In a very eminent sense Christianity is a religion of historical connections. If it be

true that its principal content was a matter of revelation, it is equally true that the revelation, to a large extent, was imparted in and through a historic process. That process too was of notable extent. In the biblical point of view it reached across the breadth of two millenniums; and in any sober retrospect it cannot be assigned a lesser range. For, Christianity was in a sense germinant in the Hebrew dispensation. In its more essential features that whole dispensation was preparatory. Its inner movement was toward the religion of Christ, for which it provided an open door into the world and to which it contributed elements needed for completeness of content.

It is interesting to note somewhat in detail how one stage of sacred history prepared for a succeeding, and how advance in general was dependent not merely upon personal inspirations, but on the unfoldments of history. Thus the Mosaic era had its antecedents in the patriarchal. Moses found an effective basis of religious appeal to the people in the fact that he was able to proclaim the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who had revealed His friendliness by coming into known association with the forefathers.

The historic movement of the Mosaic era

was profoundly influential. On the one hand, by the great deliverances which were wrought for Israel that era impressed the thought of God as deliverer, and laid a deep foundation for a sense of obligation to Him and also of a special national vocation. On the other hand, it magnified the thought of God as the righteous lawgiver, and started the Israelites upon that course of training which led them to value righteousness and to exalt the conception of a righteous Kingdom beyond all antique example beside.

The religious treasure of the Mosaic age was inherited by the prophetic era which preceded and included the time of the Babylonish captivity. The great prophets were deeply penetrated with the ideas of God as deliverer and righteous lawgiver and with the thought of Israel as dedicated to God and destined to a high vocation. The tenacity with which they held these ideas prepared them to hope for Israel in spite of downfall. Indeed the very dismalness of the outlook became a motive with them to anticipate a specially signal intervention of God and revelation of His glorious sovereignty. Confident that the divine purpose written in the history of the nation must, in spite of appearances, be fulfilled, they looked

beyond the scene of national ruin and penned those radiant expectations which we designate Messianic prophecy. Whatever degree of divine illumination they may have received, their prophesying was plainly based to a very considerable extent in the antecedent and contemporary history.

When we come to the inaugural era of Christianity, as contained in the period of Christ's ministry, we find it no more than its predecessors, discarding historical antecedents. It is true that Christ spoke with an authority such as no teacher in Israel had ever assumed, and that a profound originality was characteristic of His teaching. But it is to be noticed that originality has a province not merely in opening up the absolutely new, but also in deepening, widening and unifying truths to which a partial recognition may already have been given. As a thoughtful writer has remarked, Christ made over such truths into a "new organic conception of human life in its relations to nature and to God, which, taken in its entirety, has no previous counterpart, and which indeed constitutes the greatest step that has ever been gained in the spiritual development of man."¹ Originality in this sense was not

¹ Edward Caird, "Evolution of Religion, II, 89, 90.

incompatible with a large employment of religious elements from the Old Testament sphere. In fact, the message of Christ had a distinct basis in the earlier dispensation. The Old Testament landscape lies in it, only the landscape is illuminated by a new light. All that the Mosaic era and the subsequent centuries taught respecting the sanctity of divine commands and the worth of loyal obedience is implicit in the precepts of Christ. In this domain He had but to spiritualize and deepen an ideal which already had been powerfully enforced upon the conscience of Israel. His own portrayal also of the Kingdom of God had most congenial antecedents in the lofty delineations of the prophets, and various passages from their forecasts of the Messiah were so apt that He could, and did, use them as means of imaging to the people His own vocation. Even in respect of such an item in His teaching as the doctrine of the immortal life, good foundations were ready to His hand in the Old Testament religion. That religion, it is true, says very little about immortality. Nevertheless, as Christ took pains to indicate,² it provides a firm ground for belief therein by virtue of its representation of man as a subject for ethical

² Matt. xxii, 31, 32; Mark xii, 26, 27; Luke xx, 37.

fellowship with God. It requires but a step in reasoning to conclude that the subject of that order of fellowship is properly destined to immortal life.

An historic basis for other elements in Christ's teaching could be adduced. But enough has been said to indicate that His message was not something brought into the world in an isolated fashion. It was congenially related to historical antecedents, and thus had the virtue of adaptation in addition to the merits of its essential contents. Had not the message of Christ been in line with a historic development, it would have had no fair chance to obtain a lodgment in the world. No company of men would have been found capable of receiving it or of understanding it sufficiently to transmit it in its integrity. As actually given it both made connection with special historical conditions, and was so broad and complete in principle as to be able to fit all times and conditions.

In another way the ministry of Christ illustrates the dependence of religious truth upon the historic method for getting itself introduced and naturalized in the world. He delivered His message by deeds as well as by words. He lived the life, and wrought the works, and

achieved the self-sacrifice most fitted to teach men the deepest spiritual verities, and to mirror to them for all time the thought and feeling and purpose of Him whom He taught His disciples to address as the Father in heaven. To instruct men in understandable terms, He made by the will of the Father, a special chapter in history. He incarnated truth and set it forth in the lineaments of a matchless life.

In the closing biblical era, the apostolic, we meet with signal illustrations of the interconnection between historic movement and the revelation and enforcement of truth. Whence came the sustained enthusiasm, the marvelous spiritual energy of that era? To refer it to the working of the Holy Spirit is to give an explanation which the New Testament itself recognizes. But evidently it is not the whole explanation. The Holy Spirit had always been in the world, and always was ready to improve opportunities for enlightening and quickening human spirits. How then account for so marked demonstrations in the apostolic era? Some consideration may be given to the idea of a divine choice of certain times to be in a special sense seasons of fruitage or of manifested spiritual efficiency; but the superior explanation may be regarded as lying in the

special opportunities of the era. The life and teaching and death and resurrection of Christ were supremely adapted to be the ground of an extraordinary spiritual working. They only needed to be grasped in their true meaning in order powerfully to dominate the minds and hearts of the early disciples. Here lay the opportunity and function of the Holy Spirit. His office was to quicken the interior vision of the disciples in relation to the new world of spiritual verities in Christ—in New Testament phrase, to take of the things of Christ and declare them unto the disciples.³ Nothing more was necessary to make these men victorious over the world. In their sense of enrichment and their consciousness of union with Him, whom they knew as combining the most perfect human sympathy with the glory of the triumphant and exalted Lord, they possessed the spring of a joyful and tireless activity. Their lives became in a sense a continuation of the biography of Christ, even as one of the foremost in the apostolic group testified in the words, "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."⁴ No abstract ideal could have wrought thus. It was the penetrating conviction that Christ had actually proved Himself

³ John xvi, 14.

⁴ Gal. ii, 20.

to be the bearer of a new economy of grace and love which made new men of the primitive disciples, and qualified them to be the heralds of a new creation. Thus their faith and teaching and life had a distinct basis in historical facts.

It is worth noting, moreover, that these disciples, after all they had received from Christ, needed to be still further enlightened by the historic method. Even men upon whom the pentecostal fire had descended required further instruction, and gained it largely through the movement of events. This was clearly illustrated on the subject of the relation of Christianity to Judaism. How was this matter expounded to the minds of the apostles? How did they come to the clear conviction of the universality of Christianity and of the opportunity of all men to enter into the possession of its riches without being required to pass through the gateway of Judaism? It is quite certain that whatever else may have aided in bringing them to this conviction, the march of events was a principal agency in the matter. Christianity proved itself to be too much alive to be held by Jewish restrictions. Gentiles in one and another district, who had never subscribed to the ceremonial law, were

taken captive by the new faith and furnished unmistakable evidence of sharing in its proper spiritual fruits. Thus the logic of facts was brought to bear in an effective manner. Divine leadership in the field of events wrought with divine inspirations in the minds of the apostles to bring them to a rounded interpretation of Christianity.

We see, then, that to a very large extent the inestimable treasure of Christian truth has been brought into the world and made the possession of men through a historic process. This conclusion, it should be observed, in no wise shuts out the supernatural; it implies only that the supernatural power, instead of acting in an abrupt and isolated way, is accustomed to choose a method which respects, as far as possible, the organic connections of events. It assuredly contributes to the fabric of human history. It makes a history into a sacred history. But it does not, so to speak, exclude the natural threads and the natural processes of weaving; rather it skillfully unites with them the threads which glorify the fabric and give to it a divine value. We may say, indeed, that it is the false supernatural, the imagined intervention of the higher powers, which seems

heedless of connection with ordinary instrumentalities and activities.

III: The Rounded Character Secured to the Biblical Revelation by the Extraordinary Completeness of Its Historical Basis

The wide sweep of the historic process which lies back of the message of Christian truth has an obvious connection with the completeness of the Christian system and with our confidence therein. It is the extent of the process which has made the Christian Bible a book of such wonderful breadth. By nothing less could so great a variety and balance of factors have been secured, or so great richness and manifoldness in the illustration of truth. The Bible in its actual comprehensiveness could not have been given to the world by any one human mind or by any single age. The best that one agent of revelation could do, within the limits of an earthly lifetime, would be to set forth the supreme things rightly coördinated with one another—the central content of faith and the governing principles of conduct. To bring in the auxiliary truths and to secure fullness of illustration the differing talents of many gifted servants of God and

the advantages of a great variety of historical situations needed to be utilized. A book like the Koran might have been compiled by a single hand, though not without drawing from already existing stores. But who can imagine a single hand writing the Bible?

Even if we glance simply at the Old Testament we are struck with the comprehensiveness of our sacred book. There is the literature of law, well fitted to nurture the sense of duty, to build up religious habits, and to fortify against disintegrating contact with alien systems. There is the contrasted literature of prophecy, more subjective in tone, emphasizing the interior disposition as the heart of religion, reaching out toward universal principles, and giving scope to the progressive elements in the religious life of Israel. There is historical narrative, full of object-lessons in morals and piety. There is the wisdom literature, giving the results of studious reflection on man and the world in the form of proverb or poem. There is finally the literature of devotion, a collection of lyrics which one may say without exaggeration mirrors the heights and depths of personal and national experience for a thousand years. Thus types broadly contrasted, but at the same time mu-

tually supplementary, make up the Old Testament and give to it a character of peculiar comprehensiveness.

If we extend the view so as to include the New Testament we shall greatly enlarge the illustration of the sweep of the biblical revelation and of the way in which it secures completeness through variety and contrast. As respects the relation between the two Testaments, a broad contrast undoubtedly is to be recognized. But the contrast is one which rather confirms than denies the divine office of the Hebraic dispensation. It is, in large part, the contrast between the glimmerings of the approaching morn and the clear shining of the full daylight. If there is any contradiction between the earlier and the later revelation, it is on points which the earlier, by its own advance, tended to revise in the direction of the later, even as Christ declared that he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill, that is, to achieve their ideal meaning and purpose.

Taking still further the New Testament by itself we may readily see how different types have supplemented one another, and so ministered to the wealth and completeness of the revelation. On the one hand, we have the

Synoptical Gospels, presenting the life of Christ in an essentially objective style. On the other hand, we have an interpreting Gospel, presenting the person and the life of Christ as they were apprehended by a mind richly dowered with mystical depth and fervor. We have the Petrine type of teaching, with its call to courageous testimony and patient endurance for the name of Christ, its predominant stress on consecrated practical activity. We have the Pauline type with its profound emphasis upon the reconciliation freely provided by God's grace, having its pledge and objective ground in the death of Christ, and waiting to be apprehended by an act of living faith. We have a supplement to Paul's teaching in the eloquent epistle to the Hebrews with its picture of Christ's reconciling office as transcending His earthly ministry and as being perpetually fulfilled in the heavenly sanctuary. We have finally the Johannine type, with its stress upon a mystical union with God, a fellowship realized through love and introducing its subject forthwith to an eternal life.

Now who would not say that the biblical system would suffer loss from the elimination of any one of the types or forms of teaching

which have been mentioned? Plainly not one of them could be spared without detriment. And so we see the grand utility, the veritable necessity, of the age-long process which gave opportunity for these various types to be developed and to gain a lodgment in human understanding and appreciation. The Bible is what it is because the patient God wrought through many centuries, by means of providences as well as by inspirations, to impress His message upon the elect spirits of the race, and at length added to all other expedients the one great expedient of sending His Son to teach and to illustrate the perfect truth of the divine kingdom.

IV: The Rational Estimate of the Dependence of Christianity on Written Oracles

In determining the indebtedness of the Christian religion to a great historic process, as a means of making known and illustrating divine truth, we have not determined precisely its relation to the Bible. The Bible differs, at least in large part, from the primary revelation, much as the record of a communication differs from the original communication. Revelation was before the Bible. The truths

which adorn the pages of the Holy Book were in the minds and hearts of its authors before they were put into written form. The great central disclosure through Christ had a place in the world years before a single Gospel was written. The Bible is simply the standard record of revealed truth, the standard compendium of the products of the revealing process. No one can deny the dependence of Christianity upon the revealing process. It could not have existed in its proper character apart from that. But what about its relation to the standard compendium, a particular set of written oracles, the commonly recognized collection of biblical books, into which the principal fruits of the revealing process have been gathered? Is strict dependence to be affirmed, or are we at liberty to assume that Christian truth, having once gotten into human consciousness, is very little beholden, for continued subsistence and propagation, to any set of written oracles?

In answering this important question the thoughtful student will find reasons against taking an extreme position on either side. It will not seem to him permissible to make small account of the dependence of Christianity upon written oracles. It sounds, indeed, rather plausible when one argues with the celebrated Les-

sing, that the truths which a divinely-guided movement has brought into the world have become the property of the human mind, have passed over in large part from being truths of revelation and have become truths of reason, and thus are so well intrenched that there is no special occasion to revert to written oracles in order to be assured of their claims. Such reasoning, however, overlooks two things. In the first place it does not sufficiently regard the liability of any system that is put into the hands of men to drift away from its own principles or to run into onesided developments. History informs us by multiplied examples that a people which would pursue the path of nobility and success has abundant occasion to keep in vivid recollection its best traditions, to cherish reverently the standards which it has evolved in its most creative epochs. Only by the use of the same method can religious society be safeguarded against declension and kept in the way of a sure progress. In more than one instance the later stages of a religion have stood in unfavorable contrast with the earlier. The lessons of history, therefore, as well as the reason of the case, teach that Christianity, in order to be secure of a normal development, needs often to revert to its originals, and to con-

template truth in the balanced presentation of it which has been given in the Bible as the record of a wide-reaching and marvelously rich historical process.

In the second place the reasoning in question errs by not recognizing the incompetency of abstract truths to take the place of concrete representations, or truths set in the forms of real history. Were one to write in condensed prose, he could put into a few pages the substance of all the history, ethics, and religion contained in the immortal poems of Homer. A like space would suffice for penning the moral and religious ideas contained in the writings of Shakespeare. But no sane man will say that the world could afford to close up the Homeric poems and the Shakespearean dramas, and to edify itself with a bundle or two of outlines and abstractions gathered from them. No more can the world accept a list of bare precepts and dogmas in place of its masterpieces in sacred literature. The mighty Hebrew drama, with its long list of scenes from the call of Abraham to the preaching of John the Baptist, with its sustained intensity, and with its wonderful interplay of light and shadow, impresses religious truth as no purely intellectual formulas, however well chosen, could

impress them. The gospel narratives have a perennial charm and a spiritual potency which no prosaic statement of the main truths for which they stand can ever approach. As well make a definition of music answer the purpose of a heavenly strain, or a mere outline subserve the purpose of the finished painting, or a physiological description take the place of the realized ideal of human beauty, as to suppose that any abstract statements about man or God can fulfill the practical office of the life-story of Christ. As was observed at the beginning of this chapter, a religion can make effective connections with men only by utilizing the historic form. The oracles, therefore, which contain the sacred history of Christianity cannot be regarded as ever destined in the course of earthly history to fulfill an inferior function.

On the other hand, a measure of caution is needed against proceeding to the opposite extreme and taking the dependence of Christianity upon the Bible in a too narrow and technical sense. We run into exaggeration if we suppose there is an obligation to set a rigid limit to approved thinking in the letter of the Scriptures. In taking that position we should go contrary to the example of the Scriptures themselves; for, the later books in the sacred

collection do not recognize the demand for a close undeviating conformity to the earlier. Granting, as we well may with all heartiness, that ruling principles for all conduct are contained in the Scriptures, we are in no wise shut out from the conclusion that it is the prerogative of Christian society to advance to one and another new, or relatively new, application of those principles. Advances of this kind have been made. From the teachings of the New Testament, for example, inductions have been drawn respecting the impropriety of human slavery which the early Christians were not prepared to draw. Improved views on some other lines may be possible. To confess this much is to honor rather than to dishonor the Bible, since it serves to emphasize the fruit-bearing capacity of the great principles to which the Bible invites perpetual attention. Successive generations are needed to bring out all the good which is locked up in those principles.

Again Christianity is not so limited to the Bible that its advocates have no function to criticize anything within biblical limits. The very nature of the Bible would lead us to expect more or less matter for criticism. Essentially it is the record of a great historic process

by which the character, will, and purpose of God have been made manifest. It records a progress in the unfoldment and inculcation of truth. Now progress of this sort naturally involves an element of criticism. The advanced stage contains an implicit judgment on one or another phase of the earlier stage as falling short of its standard. In fact there is something like criticism of Scripture within the Scriptures. Various sayings of Christ imply that the standard to which His followers are to be held is higher than that which might be drawn from the Old Testament, and is to be regarded as supplanting the latter. What Christ began to do the spirit of Christ in His disciples must continue to do in some measure, unless it is to be debarred from its office by arbitrary and inflexible presuppositions. Education up to the highest level of the Bible by natural consequence prepares one to discover an element of imperfection in some lower level.

Of course the devout student in virtue of his profound reverence will not care to spend his time in search for flaws in the Bible, any more than he will care to scan a face divinely beautiful just for the sake of discovering an imperfection. But suppose that in his perusal of

the sacred pages he actually comes across an imperfection. Will he need to be stumbled by the discovery? Assuredly not. For, what is to be asked of the Bible? Not that it should show no traces of the human channels through which its subject-matter has been transmitted. Not that it should run on the same level all the way through. What is to be asked of the Bible is, that the trend and outcome of its teaching should be such as to leave us, in all essential particulars, with a perfect ethical and religious standard. What matters it, if some errors are found in items only externally related to the purpose of the biblical revelation? They may be rated as belonging to the mere scaffolding incidental to the erection of the building proper. What matters it though some errors be found that have somewhat of a moral or religious import? If in the total movement of revelation they are clearly offset, cancelled, or corrected, we are left in spite of them with the complete standard, and they become simply memorials of the limited vision of this or that human agent in the extended line of those who have been utilized in preparing the biblical books. The thing of supreme consequence is to have the perfect standard ultimately revealed and set forth with adequate clearness.

And this is accomplished in the biblical revelation. The standard which no progress can ever leave behind is presented in that revelation. It stands forth conspicuous, exalted, glorious as a mount of transfiguration. The truths which come to a crowning manifestation in the character, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ are good enough to rule the most distant generation of men, good enough to shape forever the fellowship of God's immortal children.

The excessively technical view of the Bible makes needless trouble. No one would think of attempting to secure a stable equilibrium for a pyramid by turning it upon its apex. No more should one think of resting the cause of the Bible upon the accuracy of every detail of the Bible. No one when walking within the walls of a great temple, should he observe that a little chipping had been taken from this or that massive pillar, would be made apprehensive of the downfall of the temple. No more should one be made apprehensive of the collapse of the great biblical edifice of truth by observing a token of errancy in one or another secondary or surface matter. The way of peace and assurance for the Christian believer is not the way of faith in the necessary perfection of every item in the Bible, but rather of confi-

dence in the greatness, sufficiency, and finality of the ethical and religious system in which the biblical revelation eventuates.

An additional reason for not insisting on a high technical theory of the Bible is to be found in the undeniable facts respecting the biblical canon, or the proper compass of the sacred volume, the list of books to be approved. Who knows beyond all question what books should be included? Has any one on the face of the earth been favored with an unequivocal divine decree on the subject? In no single century has Christendom been completely agreed on the precise dimensions which should be given to the canon. A margin of conflicting opinion has persisted to this hour. That it has done so is not of vital consequence, since there is a firm consensus relative to the acceptance of all the more significant and important books. To find a way to a complete consensus seems to be out of the question. One may indeed subscribe to the dogma of ecclesiastical infallibility and so take as a finality the decision of the Council of Trent, which included in the Old Testament over half a dozen books,⁵ which Protestant judgment for the most part has continuously rejected. But how persuade

⁵ To wit, Tobith, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees, and additions to Esther and Daniel.

those of dissenting views to adopt this shorthand method of settling a question of fact. In the face of the historical record insurmountable difficulties close the way to any such result. So the best that can possibly be done is for piety and scholarship to work together to establish an approximate settlement of the canon.

Now observe the necessary bearing of this conclusion. If every book, in its entirety, which is in the Bible cannot be certified to have a right to be there, evidently it cannot rightfully be asserted that every book in its every part is inerrant on the ground that inerrancy is the peculiar distinction of the Bible. What perchance has no right to be in the Bible at all, cannot claim on the score of mere physical juxtaposition to share in the perfection which is postulated of the Bible. Uncertainty as to the limits of the canon mocks every attempt to set the actual collection of books above the liability of being tinged with errancy. Instead of cleaving to the ultra-technical theory of the Bible, it is the wise course to stress the ethico-religious wealth which makes the marvelous book able and worthy to take captive the minds and hearts of men.

CHAPTER III: THE PLACE OF JESUS, THE CHRIST, IN CHRISTIANITY

I: The Realization of the Moral Ideal in Christ

If the practical efficiency of a religion depends upon its possessing a historical character, the prime demand of the highest and most efficient religion may reasonably be regarded as the union of the ideal and the real in a historic personality. This is what Christianity claims for itself as an unique distinction. It affirms that it has not merely an unblemished abstract ideal, but the ideal actualized on the field of history, and thus made apprehensible and potent. Whatever else Christ may be in the point of view of Christianity, He is certainly the moral ideal.

A moral ideal may be regarded both negatively and positively. Affirmed of Christ in the former sense it denotes His freedom from all contamination and guilt, His perfect moral purity or sinlessness. If asked to demonstrate that Christ was distinguished by this

entire purity we shall doubtless be obliged to answer, that strict demonstration is here out of the question. A historical fact of this kind is in the nature of the case incapable of absolute proof. What is to be asked for is a weight of evidence so decided as to induce rational assent. This much of evidence, it is believed, can be produced.

1. The impression made by the life of Christ is worth citing in favor of faith in his freedom from sin. This impression may be traced in connection with three different parties. It is clearly evinced, in the first place, in the testimony given by the primitive disciples, or at least in declarations which may be regarded as certainly based upon their testimony.¹ The whole body of the apostolic literature may be said to reflect the unhesitating conviction that Christ was without sin. Paul in writings composed within twenty-five or thirty years from the death of Christ, treats the truth of His sinlessness as a commonplace of Christian thought.

As sharing in the apostolic impression we may mention next the vast company of those who in a serious spirit have brought themselves face to face with the image of Christ

¹ John vii, 18, viii, 29; 1 John iii, 5; 1 Peter ii, 22; Heb. iv, 15, vii, 26; 2 Cor. v, 21; Rom. viii, 3.

which is reflected in the Gospels. They have found that the contemplation of that historic figure has been more effective than aught besides to make them feel the exceeding sinfulness of their sins. Thus their experience has powerfully supported the conviction that in meeting the Christ they have met one whom the stains and compromises of sin never touched.

Supplementing the force of this vivid impression in the hearts of the great multitude of earnest Christians there is the verdict of men whose names are associated with high achievements in modern philosophy and criticism. If not always rendered in perfectly explicit terms that verdict is certainly not contradictory of the apostolic conviction and of the ordinary Christian consciousness on this theme. In spite of all their venturesome excursions, the philosophy and criticism of the Occident have, since the days of Kant, admitted for the major part the propriety of viewing Christ as the realized moral ideal. The contrary judgment would scarcely be looked for except among bizarre and skeptical thinkers.

2. A very important evidence confronts us in the unique fact that no trace of a consciousness of sin is discoverable in the entire revelation which Christ has given of Himself. No

note of repentance can be found in His record. Not the slightest suggestion is furnished that He ever needed to bring into the presence of the Father a word of apology. In any other earthly biography a high order of saintliness is seen to be won through profound experiences of contrition. The shadow of unworthiness never entirely disappears even from the path which ascends into the light of God's countenance. How, then, shall we explain the fact that the consciousness of Jesus was entirely free from this shadow? If the exemption was not due to the actual possession of a sinless character it was an eccentricity which naturally would have borne fruit in practical aberrations. Piety without repentance, in one who needed to repent, would have been such a counterfeit as could not well avoid exposing its artificiality and worthlessness. Accordingly the profound impression of moral worth which comes from every part of the record of Christ affords a very positive assurance that His unconsciousness of sin was not chargeable to any self-deception.

3. The spiritual freedom characteristic of Christ in divine and human relations argues that, as He was not hardened by the guilt of sin, so He was exempt from its fetters. The

tone of His life was ever that of mastery as opposed to unsuccessful striving. "He stands free in the presence of law and tradition, of friend and foe, of the world and the Father, whom He obeys not otherwise than in perfect freedom. Everywhere He feels and manifests Himself as the Son of the house who is free, and makes free in opposition to the slaves of sin." ²

4. The encouragement which Christ gave to His Disciples to approach God in His name and confidently to expect benefits when asking in His name,³ is indicative of a pronounced consciousness of entire harmony with the Father. It is not conceivable that one destitute of the assurance that He was the well-beloved Son of the heavenly Father could invite men to such heart-reliance upon Himself in their approaches to God. At any rate, if we do not suppose in Christ a luminous understanding of His position as enshrined in the complacent love of God, we must charge to Him a high stretch of fanciful enthusiasm—a thing most contrary, as will be shown presently, to the extraordinary mental and ethical balance exhibited by the Master.

5. Uniting with the foregoing elements in

² Van Oosterzee, "Dogmatics," p. 500.

³ Matt. xviii, 19, 20; John xiv, 13, xv, 16, xvi, 23, 26.

a harmonious picture of a sinless personality we have Christ's claim to be the judge of all men. Where should the consciousness of such an office reside except in the spirit of Him who was clearly assured that there was no ground of adverse judgment against Himself? Accordingly the perfectly unwavering confidence of Christ that in some high sense all men must answer for their conduct at His tribunal makes a specially forceful evidence. By all the warrant we have for imputing to Him a high degree of sobriety and self-knowledge we are invited to believe that sin had no point of attachment in Him.

Historical grounds for challenging the sinlessness of Christ are of trivial consequence. They are properly met by a reasonable supposition as to the tone and manner which accompanied His words, by a consideration of the singular authority which belonged to Him in virtue of His extraordinary mission, or by a due estimate of the occasions of righteous wrath which were presented in the course of His ministry. His words respecting the Pharisees were undoubtedly very severe. But they were deserved. The Pharisaism of that day stood for an extravagant formalism and spirit of exclusiveness. It deserved to be smitten

on its own account, and the example of its chastisement was needed to warn every company of men disposed haughtily to arrogate a monopoly of spiritual goods that such a thing is an abomination in the sight of God. The intense antipathy of Christ toward Pharisaic self-righteousness must be regarded as perfectly normal. It was, too, in no wise contradictory to gentleness. The scorching rebuke did not testify to absence of love. The Pharisees were doubtless included among the children of that disobedient Jerusalem over which the Son of Man pronounced His compassionate lament.

Regarded on its positive side the moral ideal implies a character rounded out by high qualities subsisting in balanced relation with one another. That in Christ there was an unique balance of the purest and loftiest personal traits must strike every unbiased reader of the gospel story.⁴

1. We notice in Him a peculiar union of meekness and strength. He called Himself meek and lowly in heart, and the description seems to have been justified. Until early manhood He remained in subjection to parental

⁴On this point the author deems it advisable to reproduce largely from the exposition given in his "System of Christian Doctrine," Methodist Book Concern, New York.

authority, taking no advantage of any presage of His Messianic dignity which may have found a place in His consciousness. He entered upon His ministry by submitting to a consecratory rite at the hands of one who himself declared that he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe. Void of every trace of aristocratic superiority and exclusiveness in His bearing, He was ever ready for kindly association with the most wretched and despised. While He accepted unavoidable publicity, He repelled ostentation. To work marvels merely as marvels was utterly repugnant to His spirit. He would not respond to calls for mere display. Compassion and love were the ruling motives in all His mighty works.

But with this meekness what perfect steadiness of purpose and unconquerable strength were manifested by Christ. In His speech there was an air of singular authority. With all His reverence toward the Old Testament He did not shun to mount above some of its precedents and set them aside by a word of higher command. While He had the magnanimity and wisdom to accommodate Himself to the age in all respects that did not hazard the permanent interests of truth, He was per-

fectly resolute to march against the age, to confront its frown, its mockery, and its homicidal hatred, where otherwise the assertion of principle must have been curtailed. Through all varieties of circumstance He bore the same lofty consciousness of a special vocation to mankind, and claimed an allegiance to which every earthly tie must be made secondary. Equally remote from crude force and from all inclination to compromise principle, He afforded the supreme instance of the reconciliation of meekness and might.

2. Christ exemplified the union of compassion for the sinner with sharp intolerance for sin. This is a combination which lies quite beyond ordinary abilities. Almost every man who gives a loose rein to a compassionate interest in the sinful and the abandoned is very apt to be driven into making unguarded allowances for them; and not only that, he is in danger, as respects inward feeling, of falling below the standard of that intense repulsion which ought to be felt toward all unrighteousness. On the other hand, if he endeavors to pay the full debt of genuine hatred toward sin, he is liable to repel the sinner also, and to lose the attitude of the brother in that of the censor. It does not appear to have been so

with Christ. Certainly we cannot imagine a being more tenderly compassionate toward the sinful, more warmly sympathetic toward the unworthy who were ready to strive for better things. He could fitly apply to Himself the prophetic picture of one who should not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

But at the same time it is not possible to imagine a being more intolerant of sin than was Christ. He goes back of the outward act and raises a judgment-seat over the inward motion and disposition. He arraigns intemperate and unfounded anger as approximate to the guilt of murder. He brands the unchaste desire which follows the glance as having already the stain of adultery. As if He would project something of His own antipathy to evil into His disciples, He exhorts them in words of burning intensity, "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee."⁵

3. We observe in Christ a remarkable union of spirituality with kindly contact with the world. No one can think of His life except as profoundly unworldly in tone. It seems

⁵ Matt. v, 29, 30.

scarcely to have been touched at all by the ordinary ambitions of men. His whole teaching indicates how lightly He trod upon the face of this temporal world, and how truly the spiritual realm was His real home. We see this in his exhortation to lay up treasure in heaven, to renounce anxious cares about the stores which the morrow may bring, to regard well the danger of losing the life by saving it merely to temporal weal, and to estimate the recording of one's name in heaven as the supreme cause for rejoicing.

Nevertheless, the life of Christ gives no impression of asceticism or monastic austerity. We never see Him standing with a scourge over the body; He heals instead of mutilating. We never hear Him denouncing the material world as unclean and allied with Satan. He treats it rather as the workmanship of His Father's hands, and uses it as a book of divinity from which to read off to His hearers beautiful and comforting messages of truth. He subordinates undoubtedly the temporal world to the spiritual, but He stands in a relation of harmony with the former as well as with the latter. In His spirit and way of thinking a solution is afforded to that most

difficult problem, the reconciliation of the two worlds.

4. In Christ we find deep human sensibility blended with elements of personal grandeur. Many pages of the Gospels show that His chosen title, "Son of Man," was entirely appropriate. The spring of human sympathies in Him was deep and abundant. So testify His affectionate discourses to His disciples, His embracement and blessing of little children, His compassion for the fasting multitude, His intimacy with the family at Bethany, His tears at the tomb of Lazarus, His desire that chosen friends should be near Him in the time of His agony in the garden, and His tender words spoken from the cross commending His mother to the care of a faithful disciple.

But with all this brotherliness and human sensibility, how far He stood above the ordinary plane, in religious confidence, in conscious dignity, and in the grandeur of His personal outlook! Without seeming effort He touched the highest things of the divine kingdom. He talked as though He veritably knew the Father and by right of position and nature was the channel for revealing Him to men. He invited men to a confidence in Himself which implied the most undoubting assurance that

right relation to Himself could mean nothing less than heirship to the best gifts which God has to bestow. He viewed the future with a perfectly triumphant expectation, as though already He realized that He held in His hand the scepter over its issues. Though on the way to crucifixion, without a soldier or statesman in His retinue, He looked with serene confidence toward the throne of a kingdom, before whose extent and glory all earthly dominion sinks into insignificance.

It cannot be doubted that a union of human sensibility with some degree of grandeur in the inner life belongs to the moral ideal as enshrined in an earthly career. At the same time it is not so clear that the full height of self-consciousness revealed in Christ can be regarded as unequivocally demanded by that ideal taken by itself. This fact, however, cannot be regarded as opposing the claim for Christ which our argument strives to establish. The unique balance in Him of the finest human traits so testifies to His mental clearness and sobriety that it becomes the rational alternative to believe that the high range of consciousness which He exemplified, instead of savoring in any wise of intemperate enthusiasm, was accordant with truth and fact. Moreover, it is

to be noticed that one so singular in character as to be the moral ideal might properly be expected to be so singular also in vocation and in special divine relations as to transcend in His inner vision and experience the ordinary range of human consciousness. The appearance of such a personality in a sinful race cannot reasonably be regarded as an accident. His coming must have been to realize a lofty divine purpose. His exceptional consciousness but matches the exceptional vocation, to the fact of which His very appearing testifies.

We find then the positive, as well as the negative conditions of the moral ideal to have been wonderfully met in Christ. In His stainless and rounded perfection He stands forth as the incomparable marvel of human history.

II: Christ as Teacher or Revealer

Joining the thought of the moral ideal with that of a special vocation we come to the second distinctive character in Christ which appears, that of the authoritative teacher, revealer, or interpreter of spiritual verities. As an endowment with poetical sentiment enables a man to be peculiarly responsive to the message which nature offers, so the possession of

holy character by Christ qualified Him in a peculiar degree to receive the message of the spiritual world. As the ideal citizen He was specially prepared to understand the principles of the kingdom. As the ideal Son, perfectly submitted to the will of the Father and perfectly sympathetic with His purposes, He was uniquely qualified to apprehend the mind of the Father, and to see clearly the directions of His designs in connection with mankind. But this was not all. As was noted above, the appearance of the exceptional personality cannot well be taken as anything less than a distinct sign of an exceptionally lofty and important vocation. Now the fact of an extraordinary vocation certainly suggests, if it does not require, the thought of an extraordinary communication from the divine side. It is perfectly consonant with the conclusion that Christ was called to be the light of the world, and to mark out for all time the pathway of the true life, to suppose that superior sources of illumination were vouchsafed to Him. If we are to give any place to the idea that divine light has shone into the minds of the prophets and leaders of the race, we can but conclude that in an extraordinary measure divine light was vouchsafed to the Christ

who had the loftiest and most important vocation to fulfill. We may think of Him, therefore, as qualified for the office of revealer, not merely by the high range of intuition which naturally belonged to His holy manhood, but by a full measure of communication from the resources of divine wisdom. The New Testament writers recognize this point of view, as for instance in the statement that the Father showeth the Son all things that Himself doeth.⁶

In noting the distinctive features of Christ's teaching we may appropriately emphasize the close and harmonious relation which it affirms between the demands of morality or ethics and the requirements of religion.⁷ The Gospels emphatically exclude the notion that the latter can ever be accepted as a substitute for the former, or that any kind of so-called religious performance can take the place of honesty and kindness in dealing with one's fellows. Stress upon the ethical appears at every turn. It appears in blessings pronounced upon the merciful and the peace-makers; in the strong condemnation uttered against anger and intemperate railing; in the requirement to be

⁶ John v, 20.

⁷ We use in this connection nearly the same terms as we have employed in our "New Testament Theology" (pp. 68-70). The Macmillan Company, New York.

first reconciled, so far as possible, with one's brother, before approaching God's altar; in the demand for a chastity which imposes full restraint upon the thoughts and the desires; in the inculcation of a charity and good will, which are broad and earnest enough to go out not merely to friends but to enemies also; in the instruction that consistent and effectual prayer for divine forgiveness must be accompanied by the spirit of forgiveness towards those who have trespassed against us; in insistence upon transparent sincerity and singleness of purpose; in reprobation of that haste in judgment which leads one to rebuke the faults of his fellows before taking time to discover his own; in emphasis upon the duty to order conduct toward others as one would wish to have conduct ordered toward himself; in placing alongside the supreme obligation of a man the requirement to love his neighbor as himself. This profound stress upon the ethical appears, moreover, in the whole attitude of Christ toward the Pharisaic model. Nothing plainly was more abhorrent to His mind than the rating of ceremonial scrupulosity above carefulness to fulfill the common duties springing out of the relation of man to man. Mere ritual, or ecclesiastical performance, divorced

from ethical living, and depended upon as a means of capturing God's favor, He regarded as a travesty of true religion, something to be likened to a whitewashed sepulcher. Indeed, it may truly be said that the acme of all the righteous indignation ever expressed by Christ was directed against casting ethical demands into the shade in favor of performances improperly dignified with the name of religion.

On the other hand, Christ was very remote from substituting morality, as commonly understood, for religion. As clearly as He held in view the ethical province, so clearly he recognized the all-encompassing presence of the divine. The thought of the heavenly Father was to Him as the sun in the sky. With the prophets of Israel He taught that the foremost requirement is that of loving God with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength. Spiritual victory He regarded as dependent upon cleaving closely to God; and the path to true peace and superiority to earthly trouble which He set before men was the path of self-committal to God, and of simple trust in His minute, unceasing care. From first to last in the teaching of Christ there is no suggestion but that the true life for man is one insphered in the

thought of God and in the grateful consciousness of His presence.

There is little occasion to remark that the inseparable union between morality and religion, exemplified in the teaching of Christ, is of profound significance. Religion runs into artificiality and caricature when separated from morality or only loosely associated therewith. Moral life tends to meagerness and superficiality when deprived of the vitalizing and ennobling impulses which come from the thought of divine associations. The demand of health for the individual and the community is the harmonious combination of the two. It is no inferior tribute, therefore, to the office of Christ as revealer which appears in the fact that He so profoundly accentuated the union of morality and religion.

Again it is to be noticed that the ideal which Christ sets before men, though very lofty, is yet thoroughly human. It has an appearance of being made for a real world, and real human beings. The disciple is not called to walk in strange paths, or to expect transformations that do violence to the demands of personal identity. Nowhere in Christ's words will he find a hint that union with God implies a swamping of self-consciousness, or a species

of annihilation, such as is involved in the Neo-Platonic doctrine of ecstasy and the Brahmanical doctrine of reabsorption. Nowhere will he hear a summons to lose himself save in the sense of a sane absorption in the pursuit of great, holy, and benevolent ends. Indeed the tendency of Christ's teaching is to make the man who truly appropriates it at home both with himself and with God. It rebukes nothing that is purely and truly human in men, and only asks that the human should come to its best by standing in the transfiguring light of intimate association with the divine. It is equally free from false asceticism and fanciful mysticism. While thoroughly sane and practical it is far from being prosaic or commonplace.

In any full exposition of Christ's office as revealer it would be necessary to consider the light which He has cast upon the character of God and upon the subject of the immortal life. But having occasion to treat of these topics in other connections we pass on to notice the relation which the miracles of Christ hold to His office as the authoritative revealer or expositor of spiritual verities.

And here distinct notice needs to be made of the truth that a main element in the credi-

bility of the miracles ascribed to Christ consists precisely in their harmonious relation to the office which He fulfilled as revealer. Reports of miracles, it may be said in general, are not excluded by any absolute improbability, provided it be admitted that there is a personal God back of nature, who holds to it a free relation and uses it as an instrument. Nature may be a peculiarly comprehensive instrument, but if it is only an instrument, it is quite conceivable that God may show His free relation to it by working at one point or another a departure from its ordinary course. To do so would not endanger in the least the integrity of the system of nature. Even men as free agents can produce manifold changes in the sphere of nature which her own laws left to themselves would never bring about, without at the same time working the least damage to a single natural law. Much more can the God who holds the universe of things in His hands intervene by His power to work a change which, though outside the regular course of nature, induces no sign of breach or catastrophe in her system.

The only real question, then, relative to the possibility of a miraculous working is the question of sufficient motive. Now, it may be

granted that there seems to be good reason, even though nature be viewed as subordinate to the kingdom of moral persons, why in general the divine administration should conserve the regular operation of her laws, or abstain from miraculous interventions in their sphere. A steadfast system of laws is not only a great instrument in man's intellectual and industrial development, but also in his moral discipline. It is good for him to be under the yoke of nature and to be required to conform to her imperative demands. This order of subjection helps to school him for that high citizenship to which he is called as a member of the divine kingdom. But if there is great educative virtue in such an instrumentality as the ordinary course of nature, it is also true that the extraordinary may have a special educative virtue. By the very fact that it is out of the ordinary course, an infrequent and remarkable event, it may serve to awaken attention and bring men to a vivid sense of the presence and agency of the unseen Person on whom they depend. Set over against a steadfast or relatively steadfast, system of nature, the miracle may conceivably be an effective means of tuition. It is not, therefore, to be challenged as in itself incredible. But, on the other hand, its credibil-

ity is not independent of its educative value. Better to let the course of nature, with its indubitable educational value, stand without apparent interruption, than to superinduce a miracle which does not, under the given conditions, provide a higher treasure of discipline or education. A reputed miracle which is linked with no high message, which does not carry up the mind naturally to truths which are healthful and inspiring to contemplate, is not adapted to win rational faith. It appears too much in the character of a mere eccentricity to seem worthy of divine agency. If awarded any measure of credence, it must be on the basis of an extraordinary weight of testimony, and even then it must be taken rather as an unavoidable burden than a felt benediction.

The gospel miracles have in general a special claim upon faith as meeting in a high degree the test of educative value. Seen in their true character they appear as something more than the mere credentials of a divine messenger. They contributed to the message itself. They pictured in visible deeds the same truths which Christ proclaimed by word of mouth. Divine benevolence and compassion shine through them. They are a perennial source of instruc-

tion and a perpetual incentive to religious trust and confidence. In one point of view they have a better significance for us than for the groups which witnessed them; for, having before us a picture of the completed life of Christ, we are better prepared than were those about Him to see the harmonious relation in which His deeds of power stand to His Person and teaching. Had not the deeds of power been at the same time harmonious elements of revelation, a severe strain would have been brought to bear upon the testimony in their behalf. As it is, we are prepared to receive without prejudice the cogent testimony which bespeaks faith in Christ's miraculous deeds. Fitting as congruous features into a biography whose unique characteristics have compelled even men of skeptical temper to confess that they must have been copied from actual life, they have a firm basis in the apostolic testimony which was undoubtedly the primary ground of the written reports of them contained in the New Testament.

III: The Work of Christ as Redeemer

The preceding themes have afforded a measure of preparation for the contemplation

of Christ as Redeemer, Saviour, or Reconciler. In actualizing the moral ideal, in teaching the great truths which relate to God and His kingdom, and in illustrating by a matchless example the life of sonship toward God and of self-sacrificing brotherly interest in men, He became a redemptive power, a spring of saving influence in the midst of the race. Our present theme, therefore, must be regarded as inclusive of much that has already claimed our attention. In treating it we attempt only a brief statement of the main points.

1. However much or little of a philosophy of redemption is contained in the New Testament writings, no one can fail to see that these writings profoundly emphasize the fact that a work of redemption, salvation, or reconciliation has been accomplished in and through Christ. With unceasing repetition, and in great variety of phrase, they summon to faith in Christ as the Redeemer or Saviour of men. He is reported as declaring of Himself that He came to give His life a ransom for many, to shed His blood for the remission of sins, to be lifted up that He might draw all men unto Himself. It is said of Him that He tasted death for every man; that He was delivered up for us all; that He gave Himself

for our sins; that He bore the sins of many; that He made propitiation for the sins of the people; that He gave Himself up for an offering and a sacrifice; that He was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that through Him we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our trespasses. He is described as the one through whom we are reconciled unto God and receive His free gift of justification; as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world; as the source of the purity symbolized by the white robes of the victors in heaven; as the one mediator between God and man; as the advocate with the Father and the propitiation for sins; as the way by which alone any man cometh unto the Father; as having the only name under heaven wherein we must be saved; as being the foundation for which there is no substitute; as giving power to all receiving Him to become the children of God; as the bearer of eternal life, the author to all that obey Him of eternal salvation. Many similar expressions might be added. It is not too much to say that the thought of the saving office of Christ is woven into the texture of the New Testament.⁸

⁸ See Matt. xx, 28; Luke xxiv, 46, 47; John iii, 14, 15, x, 11, 17, 18; Heb. ii, 9; Luke xxii, 19, 20; Rom. v, 6, 8, viii, 32; 1 Cor. xv, 3; 2 Cor. v, 14, 15, 21; Gal. i, 4; Heb. ix, 27, 28; 1 Pet. ii, 24; Rev. vii, 9, 13, 14; John i, 29; Heb. ii, 17; Eph.

2. While the Scriptures are much more occupied with asserting the fact of Christ's saving office than with defining its ground or method, they do make it plain that there is no propriety in drawing a contrast between Christ and the Father in respect of their relation toward the sinful race. No hint is given that the Son needed by His self-immolation to constrain the Father to grace and compassion. Nowhere is it said that the sacrifice of the Son was a procuring cause of the love of God to sinners. On the contrary, the scriptural representation is that it was out of His abounding love to men that the Father sent the Son. The imagination which dissociates or contrasts the two is thoroughly unbiblical. It strikes also against the reason of the case. The Father by virtue of His boundless love for the Son must have shared His sacrifice. While the one was nailed to the visible wood the other must have had the cross in His heart.

3. We are not required to think that pain in itself is any source of gratification to God, or that the efficacy of Christ's work depended upon the mere amount of pain endured. It

v, 2; Matt. xxvi, 28; Rom. v, 10, 11, 18, 19; Eph. i, 7, ii, 13; Col. i, 21, 22; 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20; Gal. iii, 13; Col. i, 13, 14; 1 Tim. ii, 5, 6; Heb. ix, 11, 12; 1 Pet. i, 18, 19; Rev. v, 9, 10; Rom. iii, 24-26; 1 John ii, 1, 2; John xiv, 6; Acts iv, 12, ii, 32, 33; John xiv, 26, i, 12; iii, 36; Rom. vi, 23; 1 John v, 11, 12; 1 Cor. i, 30, xv, 21, 22; Heb. v, 9; John iii, 16; 1 John iv, 9, 10.

is by a very intelligible rhetorical expedient that scriptural language is so full of reference to the sufferings, the death, and the shed blood of Christ. Herein were supplied the most striking and affecting symbols of the ethical values contained in His life-work. Did that life-work embody the purest expression of love, the most complete self-devotement, the most steadfast and unswerving obedience to holy law in all the range of its application? Then, to point to the humiliation and suffering undergone was the practical way to set forth in a vivid manner the greatness of these ethical values. What the Son of God was willing to endure and did endure gave an apprehensible measure of the love, of the self-devotement, and of the holy obedience. This explains why in sacred oratory the stress runs so largely to Christ's passion. But evidently in reflective thought it would be reversing the true order to place the sign and the measure above the things signified and measured. The former were indeed important in the line of manifestation, but the latter were indispensable in the most fundamental sense. The means of manifestation, namely the suffering and the shed blood, would have been nugatory without the high ethical values—the love, the righteousness, the

spirit of sacrifice, and the holy obedience—which needed to be manifested. Glimpses of this point of view are not wanting in the Scriptures. Christ Himself represented His death not merely as an ordeal visited upon Him, but as a deed of love and self-devotement, an experience which indeed He was not called upon to precipitate, but which yet He fore-saw and welcomed as a part of His mission. Paul also directs attention to the ethical value of Christ's sufferings, characterizing His righteous obedience as the offset to man's disobedience, and describing His death as the crowning expression of that obedience. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross."⁹

4. There is no ground for questioning the redemptive or reconciling virtue of Christ's work subjectively considered, or in respect of salutary influence upon men. Whether the so-called subjective theories contain the whole truth or not, they certainly contain truth that must be placed in the front line of every worthy exposition of this theme. The manifestation of the pure and lofty personality of Christ, His proclamation of the patient, generous, seeking love of God, His imaging forth of

⁹ Phil. ii, 8.

that love by the whole tenor of His words and deeds, and especially by His readiness to descend to the lowest depths and to drink the bitterest cup of sorrow—all this is an object lesson which has perennial efficacy to awaken the attention of men, to rebuke their sin, to show them the beauty of God's relation to them, to elicit their hope and confidence, to win their hearts. Christ is a redemptive potency in the world through the illuminating and persuasive power of the divine manifestation made in and through Him.

5. While it would be a great fault to push into the background the aspect of Christ's redemptive work just described, a question may be raised as to whether an objective bearing is not to be conjoined therewith; in other words, whether the work of Christ, besides being a means of salutary influence upon men, was not in some sense a condition, on the divine side, of the economy or scheme of universal grace, and of its open publication to the world. A review of scriptural data will show that something can be said in favor of an affirmative conclusion. In the first place the representation of Christ's death as having an import for the whole race leans to this side. Great numbers of men, so far as our knowledge goes,

have no opportunity to know of Christ, so as to be benefited by the salutary influence emanating from the revelation made in Him. When, therefore, scriptural writers speak of Him as tasting death for every man, the meaning of their words is not clear, unless it be assumed that they thought of men as standing in a universal economy of grace by reason of the work of Christ who gave His life for them. The description of Him as the one mediator between God and man and the statement that no man cometh unto the Father except by Him may be taken as implying not merely that He is a conspicuous agent of divine grace, but that the general dispensation of divine grace is conditioned upon His person and work. An equivalent import may be attached to the words which speak of justification as being through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; of the peace of God as being attained through our Lord Jesus Christ; and of men, while yet enemies as being reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. Furthermore the significance which the New Testament writers probably attached to sacrifices, as means of symbolizing the covering of sins, may be regarded as implying that in their references to the sacrifice of Christ they thought of it as enter-

ing into the basis of salvation, or into the ground of its possibility, and not merely as qualified to influence men toward salvation by giving a wholesome impulse to thought and feeling. Once more, New Testament language invites to a repose in Christ which, it may be said, agrees with the supposition that the economy of grace was in some sense founded in Him and not merely revealed through Him.

6. Accepting the probability that the New Testament writers attributed an objective bearing to Christ's work of redemption or atonement—in the sense of regarding that work as meeting a condition, on the divine side, of human salvation—we add a few words on the proper interpretation of the bearing in question. As already stated, it is entirely inadmissible to think of Christ's work as a procuring cause of God's love. If, then, that work is to be regarded as really a condition, on the divine side, of a general economy of grace, it must be regarded as expressing a condition which pertains simply to the method of love. The love of God itself is to be viewed as infinite and eternal. But God is infinitely righteous as well as infinitely loving. As His attributes always subsist in perfect harmony,

the method of love must always respect the claims of righteousness. This is no disadvantage to love, since it seeks the best good of the universe, and nothing contrary to the interests of righteousness can be for the good of the universe. It is not incredible, then, that in the plan for the rescue of a sinful race—the plan formed in eternity—the interests of righteousness as well as the promptings of love were consulted, and it was determined that the very One who should be the bearer of the message of love should also supremely illustrate the claims of righteousness by His perfect loyalty in the midst of sinners, His victory over every besetment, His unmeasured self-devotement, His obedience even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. In other words, the Christ of Calvary was put into the eternal plan of God in relation to the race as the perfectly fitting means to fulfill the harmonious demands of both love and righteousness. In so far as the latter order of demands is viewed as a necessary accompaniment of the former, the work of Christ which reveals and exalts it is viewed as necessary, and takes rank on the divine side as a condition of a general economy of grace, or as an indispensable factor in such an economy.

In this view there is no hint of a change of disposition in God. Since the claims of His righteousness as well as those of His love were consulted in the economy or plan of grace instituted in eternity, He is to be thought of as maintaining through all history one self-consistent disposition toward the race. He has always viewed it not simply as a race of sinners, but as a race incorporating in itself His well-beloved Son and having in Him a sure ground of righteousness. In this sense it may be said that God reconciles Himself through Christ to the race, as well as provides for the reconciliation of the race to Himself. He reconciles Himself to the race not as undergoing a change of attitude in time, but as having in Christ from eternity a ground of a more complacent attitude toward the race than He could otherwise have.

IV: The Lordship of Christ

The name of Lord, which is applied to Christ in the New Testament, directs our thought not merely to a historical personage on the theater of this world, but to a being clothed with continuous power and prerogative. Christ Himself thus interpreted His lordship. He

claimed it indeed as something already belonging to Him in the midst of His earthly ministry. He displayed it in the authoritative tone of His speech, in His mastery over disease and death, in the exercise of the prerogative to forgive sins, in His placing of relationship to Himself above all earthly relationships, in His very significant declaration of the subordination of Sabbath observance to the will of the Son of Man, in His institution of ordinances to be perpetually observed. But with all this exhibition of regal authority on earth Christ still contemplated the exercise of His lordship as lying principally beyond His resurrection and return to the Father. He expected to accompany with His spiritual presence the consecrated servants of His kingdom. He promised to be with His disciples always even unto the end of the world. He authorized them to anticipate a glorious era when they shall renew companionship with Him and be welcomed to a life of transcendent nobility and unending felicity.

In harmony with the expectation and promise of the Master is the whole line of apostolic reference. Christ is identified as the source of the new spiritual energy which came into the souls of the disciples on the day of

Pentecost. Baptism is said to have been administered in the name of Christ. The martyred Stephen commended to Christ his departing spirit. Christ is spoken of as the Lord of glory, Lord of the dead and of the living, one whom every tongue is to confess as Lord. He is described as the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very image of His substance. He is characterized as the fashioner and upholder of all things. He is viewed as an inward vitalizing power, making free from the law of sin and death, dwelling in the hearts of faithful disciples and bringing His life to manifestation in their conduct. Instead of being thought of as beyond the range of practical brotherhood, He is represented as touched with a feeling of the infirmities of tempted mortals, and as ever living to make intercession for them. He is conceived to be in this lower world where any humble group is gathered in His name. He is conceived also to be enthroned above the hosts of the world on high, joint recipient with the Father of the ascriptions which are rendered by the innumerable multitude, and joint source with Him also of the light of heaven.

It appears, therefore, that the lordship of Christ is a very vital and practical matter. The

ascended Lord is also the ever-present Lord. He companies with the disciple in the intimacy of a heart companionship. He is brother and Lord in one, truly human and truly divine. So completely is He with men that He serves as the perfect bond of union between them; and so intimately is He related to the Father that He provides the perfect way of approach to Him. Surely lordship never took on a more lovable aspect than in Christ! Allegiance to Him makes no grievous yoke.

In the concrete picture of Christ the human and the divine give us no real trouble by their contrasts. They are as well fitted to one another as earth and sky in the landscape. To analyze their interrelations is, however, a task too great for our limited insight. Probably the best that we can do is to think of the divine as a kind of over-soul closely and constantly related to the human in our Lord by virtue of the incarnation. But it would not be wise to dwell at length upon this form of exposition. It behooves us in the interest of practical piety to pass speedily from the field of analysis and to concentrate attention upon the historic manifestation, where the human and the divine are so harmoniously united as to

set before us the image of one self-consistent personality.

*V: Supplementary Topics—The Supernatural
Conception and the Resurrection of Christ*

Dealing very briefly with these topics, we remark in the first place on the former, that the question of the supernatural conception of Jesus, the Christ, is a question relative to the method of the origination of His humanity. It has no direct bearing on the existence in Him of a transcendent or divine factor, such a factor being plainly no proper subject for generation in the earthly time sphere. Indirectly it may bear in some degree on the supposition of extraordinary powers and relationships as pertaining to Christ. The extraordinary conception suggests a destination of its subject to a very remarkable mission, and favors belief in the hidden possession by Him of corresponding personal endowments. In the immediate view, however, it simply defines the method by which the human Jesus attained to germinal existence.

In the second place, it is to be noted that there is good reason to conclude that the story incorporating this feature was no late impor-

tation, but rather had place in about the most primitive stratum of the tradition respecting the life of Mary's son. Passages in the Gospels which affirm it contain marks of a specially early origin. This applies very noticeably to the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel. "Whatever," says Professor Sanday of Oxford, "the date at which the chapters were first set down in writing, in any case the contents of the chapters are the most archaic things in the whole New Testament."¹⁰ The judgment of Professor Weinel is no less positive. "Although Luke," he writes, "first with the art of his speech may have imparted to the story a part of its charm, in its whole trend it is much older and belongs alone, through the fact that it traces back Jesus beyond Joseph to David, to the oldest material we possess from the Christian company."¹¹

The third legitimate proposition may take this form: Historical disproof of the supernatural conception has not been, and in all probability never can be, achieved, any more than downright historical proof. Certainly no real installment of a disproof has been furnished in the fact that one reading in an an-

¹⁰ Cited by James Orr, "The Virgin Birth," Appendix.

¹¹ "Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments," p. 233.

cient manuscript of Matthew's Gospel can be taken as ignoring the extraordinary agency of the Spirit in the conception of Jesus. Within the space of four verses this same manuscript categorically affirms that peculiar agency. As against this record, and the record of Luke with its archaic stamp, the single verse in the single ancient copy of Matthew's text cannot be rated as an evidence of appreciable weight.

About as little decisive for the negative as the above item is the presumed and not improbable fact, that the genealogies, as set down in both Matthew and Luke, give the line of Joseph. This was the appropriate procedure in setting forth the fact of the Davidic right pertaining to Jesus, even in face of the supposition of the supernatural conception. As Dalman remarks: "A case such as that of Jesus was, of course, not anticipated by the law; but if no other human father was alleged, then the child must have been regarded as bestowed by God upon the house of Joseph, for a betrothed woman, according to Israelitish law, already occupied the same status as a wife. The divine will, in the case of this birth, conferred upon the child its own right of succession, which, once Joseph recognized

it, would not have been disputed even by a Jewish judge.”¹²

How unlikely are the chances for historical disproof is well illustrated by attempts to explain the importation of the notion of the supernatural conception into the primitive Christian community. Authorities here are in conflict. Schmiedel is averse to identifying Judaism as the source. He declares, “The notion of a supernatural birth never at any time attached to the idea of the Jewish Messiah.”¹³ The more conservative Dalman adds his weighty authority to this statement,¹⁴ and it may be regarded as confirmed by the known position of the stricter wing of the Ebionites, by the language which Justin Martyr puts into the mouth of the Jew Trypho, and by the testimony of Hippolytus. On the other hand, Lobstein discovers no credible antecedent to the doctrine of the supernatural conception except in the religion of Israel. So deep-seated was the aversion which primitive Christianity felt for polytheistic paganism that it would surely have been disinclined to borrow from that province.¹⁵ The judgment of Pro-

¹² “The Words of Jesus Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language,” pp. 319-320.

¹³ “Encyclopædia Biblica,” article, *Mary*.

¹⁴ “Words of Jesus, etc.,” p. 276.

¹⁵ “The Virgin Birth of Christ,” pp. 75, 76.

fessor Harnack is corroborative. He says: "The conjecture that the idea of a birth from a virgin is a heathen myth, which was received by Christians, contradicts the entire earliest development of Christian tradition."¹⁶ Even agreement on the part of historical critics as to the source from which it might plausibly be assumed that the idea of the supernatural conception may have been borrowed would not be any complete historical disproof of that idea. Under the actual conditions, then, it is quite apparent that real disproof has made insignificant headway along the line under consideration.

From the very nature of the subject faith in the supernatural conception cannot claim the most decisive credentials. Apart from the testimony of a very early and vital tradition, it can only appeal to the general congruity of the reported extraordinary birth with the person and office of Christ as they stand forth in the New Testament. Those who are ill affected toward the supposition of the real occurrence of miracles in any field will naturally be very ready to challenge the historicity of the gospel story of the virgin birth of Jesus. Those not intolerant of the given supposition

¹⁶ "History of Dogma," I, 100, cited by G. H. Box, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus."

are under no compulsion to take that alternative. The author confesses that, for himself, he has no quarrel with that specification on this theme in the Apostles' Creed which has been on the lips of the great majority of Christians for nearly two thousand years.

It is not too much to say respecting the evidences for the resurrection of Christ that they make as near an approach to historical demonstration as could with proper sobriety be demanded. Some apparent disagreements in the gospel narratives may indeed furnish matter to the objector. But a criticism which has not become near-sighted and picayunish by continuous grubbing in small details will not magnify the import of discrepancies in the subordinate particulars of brief and independent reports. The main stress is due to the prominent and concurring lines of evidence; and these are by no means scanty in connection with the present theme.¹⁷

1. We have the fact that a man of Paul's moral potency and intellectual caliber, on the basis of data gathered within a very few years of Christ's death, specified as vouchers for the actual appearance of the risen Christ a full

¹⁷ For a fuller statement of the evidence see the author's "System of Christian Doctrine," pp. 581-590.

list of witnesses, the majority of whom were still alive at the time when he wrote. As having been formerly a special agent of the Pharisaic and priestly party in its attempt to suppress those who believed on Jesus, he must have known what that party was able to offer against the fact of the resurrection. Undeniably he had very eminent qualifications to serve as the competent witness.

2. We are furnished with the unanimous testimony of the New Testament historians to the fact of the empty tomb. What had become of the body? To charge the disciples with having stolen and concealed it lands one in helpless absurdity. A dead body under their hand and a lie upon their tongues and consciences could never have fitted them to be the heroes and martyrs of a new dispensation. On the other hand, if their opponents had rifled the tomb, they had but to produce their prey to confound the new-born enthusiasm of the sect of the Nazarene.

3. We are given the concurring testimony of Paul and all the Evangelists respecting the appearance of Christ to the whole apostolic company. And with this phase of history we may legitimately conjoin the fact that there was manifestly at work in the company of the

disciples, very soon after the crucifixion, a mighty creative power, such as might well have issued from a great and marvelous event like the reappearance of the beloved Master. To suppose that the transformation was wrought by the ghostly images born of dis-tempered fancies makes a great strain upon rational conviction. Then, too, it is troublesome to conceive how groups of individuals, some of whom were among the most hard-headed and practical men anywhere to be found in that age, could have been subjects for a common and simultaneous illusion. It is to be noted, moreover, that the disciples believed, not merely that they saw the risen Christ, but that they also received messages from Him. Is it to be supposed that their senses conspired to play them tricks? Of course the reality of the messages may be denied. But the fact remains that they were conformable to the tenor of the Gospels, and in their combination of simplicity and grandeur they are such messages as might properly be supposed to have been spoken by the risen Lord.

4. The resurrection of Christ is made credible by the intimate relation existing between the recorded forecast of the same and an in-

dubitably fulfilled prophecy. All the evangelists testify that Christ foretold to the disciples, with specification of approximate date and circumstances, His violent death. They are clear and emphatic on this point. Now the fulfillment of this line of prophecies makes for belief in the fulfillment of the declarations of Christ respecting the rising of the Son of Man from the dead which was to succeed the ignominious death. It may be alleged indeed that if these forecasts of the resurrection had been actually spoken, the disciples would not have fallen into such a despairing mood after the crucifixion of their Leader. But this induction is not well taken. Only by slow degrees did the disciples rise to anything like a spiritual conception of the Messianic kingdom. From their habitual point of view the death of the Messiah was a dark enigma. It seemed to them like the swallowing up of all hope and promise. They remained unreconciled to the thought of such a terrible issue. By natural consequence the forecast of the resurrection of the Master remained in mist and obscurity. As one of the evangelists reports they had questionings on the subject and shrank from asking explanations.¹⁸ When therefore the

¹⁸ Mark ix, 31, 32.

catastrophe came, and Jesus yielded up His life upon the cross, they were too stricken in heart to entertain any substantial hope. So their mood does not deny the utterance of the assurances respecting the rising from the dead. He who spoke with true forecast of the crucifixion may reasonably be supposed to have spoken with true forecast of the resurrection.

5. Finally we have the consideration that the resurrection may most reasonably be reckoned as a completing factor in the office of Saviour so prominently associated with Christ in the Gospels.

CHAPTER IV: THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING RESPECTING GOD

I: A Word on Proofs of the Divine Existence

The scriptural writers were very little inclined to engage in formal argumentation for the existence of God. Beyond question they were deeply convinced, especially those of them who were richly endowed with poetic sentiment, that nature attests a mighty and wonderfully skilful Maker. To them it seemed that the heavens declared the glory of God, and that the orderly motions of the sun, moon, and stars could reasonably be referred to nothing else than the guiding hand of the Great Shepherd of the skies. It was their judgment that the man who said in his heart, "There is no God," had unequivocally earned the title of "fool." Not one of them would have hesitated to subscribe to Paul's declaration that the everlasting power and divinity of God have, ever since the creation, been so clearly revealed, through the things that are seen, that those who refuse to recognize Him are without excuse.¹ Still it was their habit to

¹ Rom. i, 20.

assume rather than attempt to prove the divine existence. They evidently felt that it was a truth which shone too brightly in the inner sanctuary of men's spirits to make it needful to be trying to cast upon it the rays of formally stated proofs.

Some in our times are distinctly less appreciative of attempted proofs than were the scriptural writers. They not only advise practical abstinence from them, but are forward to disparage them as essentially worthless. This strikes us as neither necessary nor prudent. We grant that the so-called proofs have at times been overrated. None of them reach to the point of absolute demonstration. At best they furnish only substantial grounds for a rational and warranted faith. We grant also that one and another of the proofs, however much cried up by its author and zealously repeated by his disciples, has no claim to acceptance and continued use. This remark holds of the Anselmic argument, and also of the Cartesian in at least one of its forms. Unmistakable faults attach to these as virtually harboring the assumption that it is possible to establish a fact on the sole basis of a conception, to deduce a reality from an idea pure and simple. Disaf-

fection, however, toward proofs of this type does not justify a wholesale repudiation of attempts rationally to establish the truth of the divine existence. While formal arguments do not function as the main ground of faith, they are likely in the long run to exercise a steady influence over conviction. This much at least can be said of the cosmological and teleological arguments.

The first-named emphasizes the demand for a real cause of the cosmic system and for an intelligible explanation of interaction between the several parts of that system. It is contended that a second cause, or simple medium for the transmitting of efficiency, does not answer to the genuine conception of cause. If it is objected that the search for cause in this character should be renounced, it is answered that an alternative of this kind cannot be made satisfactory to the human mind. It is not agreeable to its constitution to rest upon the notion of an efficiency which, though not original, comes from nothing and nowhere. The postulate of an endless regress denies a point of rest to the mind by denying to it the conception of a real cause. Those who say, renounce the principle of causality, are not giving advice that is easy to carry out consistently. Any

one of them may be expected implicitly to follow the example of Hume, who exercised himself greatly, right in the midst of his attempt to discredit the principle of causality, to discover the *cause* of our belief in causality. The quest for cause is native to man and appropriately leads him up to the First Great Cause, the one Reality that is reasonably postulated as explaining all else.

The other feature of the cosmological argument, the requirement for a satisfactory account of sustained interaction between all parts of the world system, so as to make and conserve it as a real system, is of no slight value. The members of the system are severally dependent, and adding them together would not constitute them an independent entity. Here the point of view of Professor Bowne is not a little illuminating. "An interacting many," he says, "cannot exist without a coördinating one. The interaction of our thoughts and mental states is possible only through the unity of a basal reality which brings them together in the unity of one consciousness. So the interactions of the universe are possible only through the unity of a basal reality which brings them together in its one immanent omnipresence."²

² "Metaphysics," first edition, p. 126.

The teleological or design argument vies in cogency with the foregoing. Arrangements that accomplish on a vast scale results that are worthy of intelligence and purpose have a weighty claim to be referred to intelligence and purpose. And how can any man, who does not compel himself to look through the distorting mists of a rank pessimism, fail to observe an abundance of arrangements that conform to this description? It was not one tied to traditional creeds, but John Stuart Mill, who said, "I think it must be allowed that, in the present state of our knowledge, the adaptations in nature afford a large balance in favor of creation by intelligence."³ Evolution theory may have served to modify our method of reading the marks of intelligence or design, but it has by no means cancelled them. Many eminent naturalists have confessed as much. Recently increased emphasis has been given to the truth that the "survival of the fittest" does not carry with it an explanation of the arrival of the fittest, and of its arrival in such order as to lead on in an ascending scale the successive ranks of organic life. It is in fact a very easygoing mental process that, in the presence of the world with its manifold and marvelously

³ "Three Essays on Religion," p. 174.

interrelated parts, can dispense with the Divine Agent.

The argument from human nature may be classified as a select part of the proof from design. In practical virtue it has not been dethroned, and there is the scantiest reason to suspect that it ever will be. In all his nobler endowments—intellectual, moral, religious, and æsthetic—man proclaims that he came, not from the dust of the earth, but from an all-wise and benevolent Spirit who designed him to fulfill a high destiny.

*II: Elements of the Hebraic Conception of God
which Are Reproduced in Christianity*

It is not without a special advantage that we are able to deal with the theme of this chapter on the basis of an established conception respecting the place of Christ in Christianity. The assurance that He impersonated the moral ideal, and was charged with an extraordinary vocation, supplies us with most valuable grounds of confidence in construing the idea of God. Wherever it appears difficult to harmonize an ideal conception of the Divine Being with existing facts, it is of great consequence to be favored with the testimony of an

expositor so well authenticated as we may rationally believe the Christ to have been.

In characterizing the Christian conception of God we may notice, in the first place, that it reproduces the three prominent elements of the Hebrew conception, namely, absolute supremacy, distinct personality, and intensity of ethical life. The first of these elements certainly is discoverable in the higher range of Hebrew thinking. It appears in the way in which the creation narrative, in the opening chapter of Genesis, describes God as originating all things by the word of His power. The Psalmist gives vivid expression to it in the declaration, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . . He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast." ⁴ The hero of the Book of Job affirms it in terms no less graphic. After giving a catalogue of the mighty works of God, he adds, "Lo these are but the outskirts of His ways; and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand." ⁵ Isaiah gives poetic representation to the same truth when he speaks of God as stretching out the heavens, like a curtain, or says that over

⁴ Ps. xxxiii, 6, 9.

⁵ Job xxvi, 14.

against Him the nations are but as the drop of the bucket and the small dust of the balance.”⁶ The like thought prompts Jeremiah to exclaim, “Lord, God! behold Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and by Thy stretched-out arm. There is nothing too hard for Thee.”⁷ Indeed, should one attempt to frame the strongest possible assertion of the absolute supremacy of God, in language addressed to imagination and feeling, as well as to intellect, he could not do better than to copy the sentences in which the Old Testament writers expressed their sense of the divine greatness. It was not God alongside the world, or submerged in the world, whom they contemplated; it was rather God supreme over the world and the almighty fashioner of all that it contains. They had no place accordingly for the notion of a limit upon the divine rule, such as is implied in the classic conception of fate. Making the universe of things thoroughly dependent upon God they could apprehend no occasion for supposing that out of its sphere there could arise any power capable of defying divine mastery.

As regards the personality of God, it does not seem to have entered the minds of the He-

⁶ Isa. xi, 15.

⁷ Jer. xxxii, 17.

brew writers that there was any room for doubt. In their thought God was unequivocally the Supreme Person. And this meant two things. It signified, in the first place, that God is a being who has self-grasp, who makes and executes purposes, who dwells in the full light of self-consciousness. In the second place, it signified that God is a being with whom real fellowship is possible. It was indeed felt that He is partly shrouded in mystery. His presence at times seemed to be illusive. Thus Job was led to exclaim, "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, when He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him."⁸ Nevertheless, it was the Hebrew conviction that God stands to man as person to person. He has intelligence to hear and a heart to respond. A righteous man is privileged to rise superior to the sorrows and enigmas of life by entering into true converse and fellowship with Him. Even piety to-day can find few sentences better adapted than the vivid language of the Hebrew Psalms to express the repose of soul, the exuberant joy, and the sense of enrichment which belong with

⁸ Job xxiii, 8, 9.

the assurance that the Divine One is near, accessible, and responsive.

In harmony with this lively conception of the personality of God, Hebrew thought ascribed to Him great intensity of ethical life. It represented Him as the living God, alert, active, keeping His eye upon all things and all events. No spirit of indifference or slumber attaches to Him. He has genuine delight in the righteous and the trustful. He is near them even before they call upon Him, their helper and refuge, their rock and strong tower, their light and salvation. On the other hand, His face is against them that do evil. "There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." ⁹ God possesses indeed the calm and majesty of conscious might. But in Him intensity is joined with the calm. He is alive to the very depths of His ethical nature, penetrated with the feelings which in an inferior measure characterize the true man. He is intense in His love and intense in His abhorrence. All things are naked and open in His sight, and He never views them with a careless glance.

We have said that Christianity takes up these three elements of the Hebrew concep-

⁹ Job xxxiv, 22.

tion of God. With entire right we may add that, in every point of view, it is justified in so doing. Good philosophical warrant is on the side of their appropriation.

With substantial unanimity through the Christian ages, and in emphatic terms, the first of the three elements has been affirmed. But strangely enough in our time a few writers have shown a fondness for the conception of a limited God. They contend that a certain religious advantage pertains to the notion of a Deity who is circumscribed in power and under compulsion to battle with varying degrees of success against adverse world conditions. This view, they apprehend, involves an effective summons to men to help God in the task which puts so serious a strain upon His abilities. But it is quite certain that in the long run religion must be damaged rather than helped by such a way of thinking. To make God an object of pity or patronage is to dethrone Him. The attitude of worship is not to be fostered by the contemplation of a weak and baffled Deity. The call to be coworkers with that sort of a world-sovereign cannot be made truly inspiring. It is vapid and nugatory compared with the summons enshrined in the thought that God almighty clothes us with

marvelous honor in constituting us copartners with Himself in the working out of His great designs, simply because He is both wise and gracious. It is enough to quicken us to do our best—this thought that out of His wisdom and benevolence He makes us the bearers of His grace to our fellows, in order that we may be lifted up toward the likeness of His own goodness, and that men may be the more firmly woven together into a close-joined fabric, an ideal society. The God who stands upon this high plane meets most fully the demands of the religious sentiment, and we can work in His presence with a hope and satisfaction which could not possibly be evoked by a God who is too small for His universe and needs to be helped up to His throne.

The second characteristic element in the trend of the Hebrew revelation, namely, distinct personality, has sometimes been challenged from the side of a speculation inclining to pantheism. The infinite, it is argued, cannot be personal, since self-consciousness is fundamental to the notion of personality, and self-consciousness is realized through the opposition of subject and object; but the infinite can not have any object set over against itself, inasmuch as the object would be a limit or bound,

and so would deny infinitude. This reasoning may have a plausible look. Its defects, however, are not beyond discovery. In the first place, it errs by making the conditions of finite consciousness a standard for estimating those of all consciousness whatsoever. A limited being like man necessarily grows in large part by what is contributed to him, or by reaction against his environment. He knows himself in and through his psychical states, and these as a matter of fact are largely determined by outside objects. But what reason is there for supposing that in the case of a being who is not under the law of growth, who as infinite has a complete content, there is any such dependence in the mental life upon an objective sphere of being? A conditioned developing being may well have a conditioned consciousness. It by no means follows that the same is necessarily true of the original, unconditioned Being.

In the second place, the reasoning in question does not do justice even to the facts of finite consciousness. It involves an implicit assumption of the essential passivity of mind. For, unless the mind be purely passive it is not wholly dependent for self-consciousness upon reaction against an object. All that it

needs for self-consciousness is positive states or exercises. Accordingly, if either it has positive states of any sort by virtue of its constitution, or has a power of generating states, a faculty for initiating any sort of mental movement, it has in itself materials for at least some degree of self-consciousness. Now, of these suppositions the former is at least incapable of disproof. As for the latter, it is strongly sustained. The spontaneous irrepressible conviction of men is on its side. Men are practically unanimous in the persuasion that they have freedom, or the power of initiation. Moreover, the acknowledgment of such a power is a necessary condition of an intelligible account of moral responsibility, not to say of an intelligible account of the distinction between truth and error. But if finite minds possess this power of initiation, much more may this be supposed to be the case with the Supreme Mind. The notion, therefore, of its necessary dependence upon an objective sphere for positive mental states or exercises must appear to be illegitimate, and the objection urged against the possibility of self-consciousness or personality on the part of the infinite falls away.

In the third place, the notion that the infinite must be impersonal errs by setting aside the

richer conception of the infinite for one that is comparatively formal and empty. Greatness is not reached by the mere pushing out of a line, or by simple extension. The content or quality of being is of supreme moment in an estimate of greatness. To exclude from the infinite the highest attributes or functions of which we have any conception, namely self-knowledge and free activity, is to deplete it of the highest forms of greatness in the interest of a vague extension. It is indeed to impose the most disparaging kind of limitations in the name of rejecting all limitations. The infinite perfections of God, as the philosopher Lotze contends, so far from militating against His personality, enforces the conclusion that He alone has personality in the highest sense. Self-grasp in finite beings, though real, is imperfect.

As regards intensity of ethical life in God, the challenge to the Hebrew conception comes from a deistic way of thinking. To affirm relations of familiarity between God and the world of creatures, the typical deist argues, is disparaging to His dignity. He discharged His responsibility to the world by setting it in motion under a comprehensive system of laws. As respects the details of its affairs

there is no call for His interference or even for His concern. It borders on the absurd to suppose so lofty a Being to have any real care for the conduct of such small beings as men. Their puny deeds can neither darken His infinite glory nor add a ray of light thereto. So runs the deistic plea. It may seem rather formidable at first thought, but it will not endure inspection. A little reflection must convince one that ethical greatness does not lie in the direction of indifference. It is rather meanness and poverty of spirit that are on that side. No parent proves himself great as a parent by holding himself aloof from his children in relation to their joys, sorrows, and diversions. Save as the chords of His own being vibrate in response to their varied experiences he lacks the first requisite of parental greatness. No sovereign demonstrates his greatness by despising his subjects and overlooking in haughty unconcern both their crimes and their sufferings. In his indifference to the character and well-being of his subjects he is more like to the marble image of a ruler than to the true sovereign. In all earthly relations it is recognized that the loftier the personality may be, the more beautiful and seemly appear his deeds of kindness and consideration toward

the humble, the weak, and the ignorant. Why should any different measure of greatness be insinuated into our thought of God? No good reason, we are persuaded, can be alleged. Nothing can be accounted more worthy of Him than to be concerned for the moral commonwealth and for every member thereof. It degrades the thought of God to picture Him as a sleeping Brahma, instead of regarding Him as the living God, touching every form of being, loving all that is worthy of being loved, and abhorring all that is worthy of being abhorred.¹⁰

III: The Christian Thought of God as Father

While Christianity borrows, as has been explained, cardinal elements from the Hebrew

¹⁰ In a formal discrimination of divine attributes they may be ranged in two classes, the metaphysical and the ethical. The metaphysical attributes may be enumerated as unity, spirituality, immutability, omnipresence, eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence. The ethical attributes are righteousness and love. With righteousness holiness and justice may be conjoined. The three terms may be regarded as designating the same fundamental aspect of the divine nature from somewhat different points of view. Whatever may have been the sense attached to holiness in Hebraic usage, in its English meaning it stresses stainless purity or absolute aloofness from moral corruption. The righteousness of God signifies that in His nature is the unimpeachable standard of right, and that His will is always in absolute accord with that standard. The attribute of justice connects with the same conception a more distinct emphasis upon the executive function of God's righteous will in apportioning to moral agents the awards suitable to their character and conduct. As for love it is a principle or disposition of self-impartment for the benefit and beatification of another. According to the relation in which it is exercised it may be described under different terms. Considered in relation to creatures generally, it is goodness, good-will, or benevolence. Considered in relation to the sinful and disobedient, it is mercy and long-suffering. Viewed in relation to those who are so in affinity with God as properly to be called His children, it is love in the sense of complacency and of spiritual union and communion.

conception, it cannot be said to stop on the plane of Hebrew thinking. By further development, or by incomparable illustration, it broadens and irradiates the idea of God. The Gospels bring us, so to speak, into a new atmosphere. They have a message beyond that which even the prophets and the psalmists were able to give. They present God in a more amiable light, make Him more approachable, and invite to a more homelike feeling in His presence. To sum up the advanced point of view in a word, we may say that the Gospels are permeated with the thought of the fatherhood of God in His relations to men. The Old Testament was indeed on the way to this conception. It reached the thought that God stood in a fatherly relation to the chosen nation, or to the king as the representative of the nation. Here and there the better thought that the individual as such is entitled to look to God as Father may be implied in the Old Testament statements. Still it is in the New Testament revelations that this truth first attains the rank of a pervasive and controlling conviction.

The Gospel view of the divine fatherhood had a practical and not merely a theoretical ground. That ground was the consciousness

of Christ. He had a perfectly luminous sense of His filial relation. He knew Himself as the beloved Son, joined to the heavenly Father by identity of purpose and will, giving to Him unlimited trust, doing always the things that pleased Him, and standing always in the light of His complacent love. He could say at every turn, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

It would be impossible to imagine a more effective way of disclosing to the world the great truth of the divine fatherhood. From the image of perfect sonship, which we have in Christ, thought easily passes to its correlate. Indeed the filial in Christ directs us at once to the paternal in God. By all our faith in the spiritual clearness of the former we are compelled to believe that His perception was in full correspondence with the essential disposition of the latter. His perception, therefore, lends itself to general use. The image of the heavenly Father which was mirrored in his filial soul becomes unto all who will consider it a means of contemplating God in the beauty and attractiveness of his paternal character.

In His formal teaching Christ seeks ever to draw men to a share in his own serene confi-

dence in the heavenly Father. Pointing to the delight which parents, notwithstanding the imperfection and selfishness which cling to them, experience in bestowing gifts upon their children, He adds, "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him."¹¹ He assures His disciples that so long as they fulfill the supreme duty of seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it is needless to harbor an anxious thought about the temporal stores of the morrow.¹² The heavenly Father who feeds the birds and clothes with more than Solomonic glory the short-lived flower of the field will not neglect to provide for His children. In graphic expression of the minuteness of the care which aims at their protection and well-being, Christ declares that the very hairs upon their heads are numbered by the heavenly Father. He invites them, furthermore, to see in all His own readiness for self-sacrifice and affectionate fellowship an image of the Father's disposition toward them. If He pictures Himself as the good shepherd, ready to lay down His life for the sheep, He adds: "Therefore doth

¹¹ Matt. vii, 11.

¹² Matt. vi, 25-34.

my Father love me because I lay down my life." If He declares that He will come and manifest Himself to the obedient disciple, He declares also that the Father will come to the same disciple and take up His abode with him.¹³

We should hardly expect the New Testament epistles to present the thought of the divine fatherhood in quite as genial a manner as do the Gospels, since Christ in His matchless filial consciousness was the matchless expositor of divine fatherhood. Still it is no faint or lifeless expression of this truth that meets us in the messages of the apostles. Paul indicated clearly enough that he felt the glow of it when he described the privilege and experience of the believer in these words: "Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."¹⁴ John showed that he was no stranger to the same truth when he exclaimed, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God."¹⁵ The

¹³ John x, 17; John xiv, 23.

¹⁴ Rom. viii, 15, 16.

¹⁵ 1 John iii, 1.

author of the Epistle to the Hebrews gave evidence of a like conviction when he instructed his readers to find in their very tribulations a token of the fatherly interest of the God who is wont to chasten His children for their own profit.¹⁶ The truth of the divine fatherhood runs indeed through the New Testament, though one needs to get near the Christ in order to be cognizant of its warmest pulsations.

The question has been raised whether in New Testament thought the divine fatherhood is made coextensive with the race. If one rests in the letter of certain sentences, he can doubtless make out somewhat of a case for the negative side. Mention is made of the wicked as holding a filial relation to Satan rather than to God.¹⁷ Stress is also placed upon the necessity of rebirth¹⁸—a form of words which may be regarded as implying that the estate of children of God is something to be acquired instead of being universally possessed. Still further, men are represented as gaining the right to become the sons of God by receiving the message of salvation.¹⁹ Finally they are spoken of as receiving the adoption of sons.²⁰ Such language seems to put a limitation upon

¹⁶ Heb. xii, 7-11.

¹⁷ John viii, 44.

¹⁸ John iii, 3-6.

¹⁹ John i, 12.

²⁰ Gal. iv, 5.

sonship, and this quite naturally may be regarded as implying a limitation upon fatherhood likewise.

Still, it would do injustice to the scriptural teaching to restrict the fatherly relation of God on the ground of the sentences just cited. God may be, in an important sense, fatherly toward those who are not filial toward Him. The New Testament implies as much, and it is quite legitimate to say that the undercurrent of its thought is on the side of the universality of the divine fatherhood. As has been observed, Christ affirmed identity of disposition between Himself and the Father. He described His revelation to be the seeking and the saving of the lost. He showed by His deeds that His heart went out toward the sinful and the unworthy. He thus gave, according to His own interpretation, a distinct object-lesson on the kindly disposition of God toward the undeserving. More than this, He explicitly declared in the parable of the prodigal son, and in the related parables, that God has fatherly compassion for the wayward, and that there is joy in His presence over one sinner who repenteth. With a like breadth of meaning He represented the redeeming love of God as embracing the world, and as setting

its free bounty within the reach of everyone who will put himself in a receptive attitude. This amounts to an unmistakable affirmation that in essential disposition God is Father to the whole race. Nor is this affirmation out of harmony with the stress that is put upon the necessity that men should enter into the spiritual estate of children. In many cases they do not act like children of God; they do not cherish the disposition of true children; judged by their ruling choices they may even be worthy to be called rather children of Satan than children of God. Nevertheless, so long as they have unextinguished capacities for good they are potentially children of the Divine Father. In consideration of this remaining potentiality of goodness they are the objects of His compassionate and loving interest. His attitude is not overdrawn when He is represented as standing in a fatherly relation to them. They are doubtless sadly in need of becoming children in spiritual disposition. He is already a Father as regards the deep impulses of fatherly pity and love, else the reason why He should be willing to do so much for them remains an insoluble enigma.

What has been said does not, of course, signify that God occupies precisely the same at-

titude toward the rebellious and toward the obedient. His ethical intensity makes this utterly impossible. He delights in the dutiful child. He welcomes him to the light of His complacent love. This much He cannot do for the still unrepentant sinner. He abhors his wrong disposition and defilement. Still, as cognizant of a possibility of separating the sinner from his sin, He embraces him in His compassionate love. In this sense the Christian teaching pronounces God the Father of men universally.

It will be readily inferred from statements previously made that the gospel stress upon the fatherhood of God does not imply that His righteous sovereignty is put out of sight or in anywise dimmed. Fatherhood in this connection is not a name for weak amiability. It means all of tenderness, compassion and love that our minds can conceive, and much more. But these subsist together with an infinite regard for righteousness and never override its demands. Indeed love in its best range cannot be thought of as colliding with righteousness, as has been remarked, for love seeks well-being, and the highest well-being cannot exist apart from righteousness. There is thus in the Christian thought of God a combination

of the infinitely amiable and the infinitely reverend. He is no less a father because He is the righteous sovereign, and no less the righteous sovereign because He is a father. He has patience and superabundance of grace to help away from sin; but the authoritative messenger of His grace Himself warns us that the incorrigibly wicked must ultimately be left without any refuge.

IV: The Christian View of Prayer as Shaped by the Recognition of the Fatherhood of God

The representation of God as Father is closely related to the Christian conception of prayer. According to that conception prayer is the trustful approach of the child to the supreme Father, and the humble confident presentation to Him of heartfelt needs. So Christ described it, not only in the form of petition which He gave to His disciples, but also in the distinct appeal to the parental relation which He employed when He sought to awaken in those disciples full confidence in bringing forward their requests.

In the gospel view prayer is no piece of magic or merit-winning performance. It is the simple, unsophisticated, normal attitude of

the dependent member of the great spiritual household, who feels and acknowledges his need. Taken in this character its propriety is unassailable, at least if the dependence of men and the fatherhood of God are to be accepted. Doubtless it has sometimes been imagined that the reign of law puts a veto upon the efficacy of prayer. But so far is the conception of law from being antagonistic to prayer that it is actually helpful toward an understanding of its value. There is no law beyond, or independent of, God; and why should it not be the habit or law of His will to respond graciously to the trustful approaches of a child? Would it illustrate the reign of law if a child, who hides away morosely in a dark corner of the house, should get precisely the same benefits from the filial relation as does the one who comes confidingly into the presence of parents? It is the demand of law that where the conditions are varied the results should also be varied. True prayer brings an important modifying condition into the life. It opens up such connections with the higher sphere that it is perfectly reasonable to believe that it becomes the channel for the incoming of precious benefits. God is not grudging. His bounty is large and free. Prayer, as expand-

ing the soul in worshipful contemplation and pure aspiration, prepares for the reception of this bounty.

V: The Christian Belief in God's Benevolent Rule or Providence

The gospel picture of God's disposition and relation to men implies evidently a minute and all-embracing providence. As has been seen, we are invited to think of the heavenly Father as one who notes the fall of the sparrow and numbers the very hairs upon the heads of His children. Now, it must be admitted that appearances do not always harmonize with such a conception of divine providence. In fact, almost any life includes experiences which suggest the unheeding attitude on the part of God. He seems to hide Himself just at the point where He is most needed. The rescuing hand fails to be outstretched, and disaster is left to bring its full measure of pain and wreckage. A pessimistic temper can undoubtedly find enough with which to gratify its appetite for the somber and doleful. Nevertheless we are persuaded that it is the more reasonable, as well as the happier, disposition which keeps in sympathy with the gospel view

of divine providence. Over against the troublesome and enigmatic in human experience we may place such considerations as the following:

1. There is a general impress of benevolence upon the order of the world as related to the human family. The days when things have a genial and kindly aspect greatly preponderate over those which are associated with violence and terror. Moreover, elements of asperity in men's surroundings may be regarded as having a disciplinary office. In the ministry of discipline by a scheme of law this or that individual may suffer unduly, and yet the general result be such as might be aimed at by benevolence.

2. There is no demand to pass judgment on divine providence, as though it was its purpose to settle all accounts with the individual in the brief span of this life. Opportunities for compensation may be held in reserve for those who seem to have had more than their suitable portion of the bitter cup.

3. Inasmuch as God is not the sole agent in the world, much of the evil that men endure is by no means chargeable to His supervision. There is no reason for supposing that He could prevent the ills which misdirected free

agency induces, without resorting to a violent repression which would make the total result of human history less valuable than that which is actually being achieved.

4. The worth of the ideal of a God who exercises a perfectly kindly and righteous providence commends it to our acceptance. This is not equivalent to saying that a conception which happens to be pleasing to us must therefore be true. The ideal in question is one that we cleave to in our best moods; it is inspiring and ethically ennobling. By all our faith, therefore, in that trustworthiness of our intellectual and ethical constitution, which we are practically compelled to admit in order to get any standing ground, we are authorized to give credit to this ideal. To deny it involves a sort of suicidal thrust at what is recognized to be of the highest dignity and worth in our own natures.

5. The gospel ideal of the God of providence is commended to us by all the grounds of faith in the clearness of Christ's spiritual vision. These grounds need not be stated here, as they have already been given at length. They include all that can be said for the conclusion that Christ was the impersonation of the moral ideal and was intrusted with an

extraordinary mission to the race. One who finds this conclusion to be well established must confess himself to be well anchored to faith in the rule of God as the universal Father. He will of course encounter enigmas, but he will not be disheartened or drawn into skepticism by them. For the dissipation of the more persistent shadows he will be content to wait for the dawning of the perfect and eternal day.

VI: The Christian Conception of the Essential Relation of Christ to the Heavenly Father

In treating of the "Lordship" of Christ reference was made to texts which are pertinent to the theme of this section. A limited number of citations will, therefore, suffice in the present connection. We wish to adduce the most significant testimonies from three great divisions of the New Testament, namely, the Johannine writings, the Pauline Epistles, and the first three lives of Christ, commonly mentioned as the Synoptical Gospels.

By the general consent of scholarship the Gospel of John ascribes a transcendent sonship to Christ. In its opening verses it is declared that He was in the beginning with God, that all things were made by Him, that

He had life in Himself, which life was the light of men. In the progress of the Gospel He is represented as vividly conscious of a special relation to the Father. Words like these are credited to Him: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. . . . As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom He will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment unto the Son, that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father." A transcendent order of consciousness is also evidenced by the language which Christ uses relative to sending the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. To speak thus of sending a divine agent surely would be ill-matched with anything less than a sense of a personal divine standing. The same standing is furthermore very strikingly indicated in the spiritual dependence of men upon Himself as asserted both in His own discourse and in discourse about Him. What could be more unequivocal in import than these sentences? "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing. . . . The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal

life, and this life is in His Son; he that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life.”²¹

The writings of Paul evince substantially the same conviction as to the nature and rank of the Son which is brought out so clearly in the Johannine Gospel and Epistles. The apostle affirms of Christ: “In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” The divine form is said to be appropriate to Him, and He is represented as the judge of the race, as the supreme object of aspiration, and as the one foundation of the spiritual edifice.²² In the face of such a line of ascriptions to his Lord, it is quite evident that the apostle had no intention of assigning a creaturely rank to Him when he spoke of Him as the first born of creation—*πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* (Col. i, 15). As Von Soden remarks the genitive here is not partitive, since in that event the form would be *πάσης τῆς κτίσεως* but it is rather the comparative

²¹ John i, 1-4, iii, 35, v, 20-23, xv, 26, xv, 5; 1 John v, 11, 12,

²² Col. i, 16, 17; Phil. ii, 6, i, 21-23, iii, 8, 9; 1 Cor. iii, 11; 2 Cor. v, 10.

genitive. "The meaning is, Christ is there before every creature. Christ accordingly does not fall under the category of the creature."

It has sometimes been alleged that the Synoptical Gospels are widely contrasted with the Johannine and Pauline writings in their lack of tribute to the divine sonship of Christ. But this judgment seems to have been passing out of vogue among scholars in recent decades, and those who wish to eliminate the force of the testimonies in these writings to Christ's transcendent relationship find no expedient available for that purpose except a challenging of the historicity of the relevant texts. This is a very easy thing to do; but it is not so easy to vanquish the impression of reality which the total representation of the deeds and words of the Master in the concurring reports of the evangelists continues, age after age, to make upon the minds of men who are quite remote from the plane of unbalanced enthusiasm. In any case the testimony to the lofty rank of Christ is here in no scanty measure. It is to be noticed in the first place that He calls Himself the Son where the connection obviously implies that He is characterizing His relation to the Father. In no instance does He place Himself on a parity with

men in respect of sonship. He speaks always of *my* Father and never of our Father when His own relation is in question. The form of prayer which He dictated to His disciples makes no exception; for that was specifically a prayer for their use and not one in which He is represented to have joined with them. Again an equivalent of the lofty prerogative mentioned in John's Gospel, in the reference to the sending of the Comforter, is ascribed to Christ, in that He is represented as one who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Further He asserts for Himself a decidedly exceptional position in this remarkable declaration: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." Once more, in claiming lordship over the Sabbath and the prerogative to forgive sins Christ indicated His consciousness that in an extraordinary sense He was the Son of God.²³

Other parts of the New Testament besides these three main divisions make a contribution quite in line with their testimonies. In both

²³ Matt. vii, 21, xxiv, 36, iii, 11; Mark i, 8; Luke xxiv, 49; Matt. xi, 27; Luke x, 22; Matt. xii, 8, ix, 2-6; Mark ii, 5-11; Luke v, 20-24.

the epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation are very lofty ascriptions to Christ.

VII: The Christian Teaching on the Nature and Office of the Holy Spirit

The New Testament in an abundant list of passages refers to the Holy Spirit's works of intelligence, and such works of intelligence as manifestly belong to a divine rather than to a creaturely range.²⁴ This name, therefore, plainly designates an agent at once personal and divine. The divinity of the Holy Spirit is furthermore attested by the enormity of the sin against Him.²⁵ The Christian consciousness also bears a cogent testimony to His divinity. No work can appear to the Christian more truly divine than the renewal or sanctification of the soul. Accordingly, he cannot consent to rate the agent of that work as less than divine. Within the circle of vital Christian experience no question can rationally be made about the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

While the personality of the Holy Spirit is not subject to doubt, a question respecting

²⁴ Matt. x, 20; Mark xiii, 11; Luke xii, 11, 12; John xiv, 16, 17; Acts i, 16, ii, 4, v, 32, x, 19, xlii, 2, xvi, 6, xx, 23; Rom. viii, 14-16, 26, 27; 1 Cor. ii, 10, 11, xii, 3-11; 1 John v, 7, 8.

²⁵ Matt. xii, 31, 32; Mark iii, 28, 29; Luke xii, 10; Acts v, 3, 9; Eph. iv, 30.

His *distinct* personality is not so unequivocally excluded. In many of the scriptural passages the Spirit to whom works of intelligence are ascribed is not so fully distinguished but that He might be regarded as standing for God acting in a particular way or sphere; in other words, as denoting God in a particular order of manifestations rather than a distinct person in the Godhead; or at least as denoting no other Divine Person than the Father or the Son. But there are a number of passages that cannot with propriety be denied a reference to a distinct Divine Person. Not only in John's discourse about the Comforter,²⁶ but also in the baptismal formula,²⁷ and in various sentences of the Epistles,²⁸ the spirit is co-ordinated with the Father and the Son in a manner which implies a personality in some real sense distinct.

In respect of office, the Holy Spirit is represented as having to do with all that enters into the spiritual equipment and transformation of men. He empowers for extraordinary works and special service.²⁹ He is the source of inspired speech.³⁰ He is the efficient agent

²⁶ John xiv, 16, 17, 26, xvi, 7-13.

²⁷ Matt. xxviii, 19.

²⁸ Eph. ii, 18, 22, iv, 4-6; 1 Cor. xii, 4-6; 2 Cor. xiii, 14;
1 Pet. i, 2.

²⁹ 1 Cor. xii, 4-11.

³⁰ Luke xii, 12.

in regeneration,³¹ and the spring of filial confidence toward God.³² He sheds abroad the love of God in the heart.³³ He assists to a sense of companionship with the invisible Saviour by taking the things of Christ and showing them unto the disciple.³⁴ He consoles and illuminates.³⁵ The fruits of His indwelling are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.³⁶

VIII: Completion of the Christian Conception of God in the Doctrine of the Trinity

As appears from the foregoing discussion, and as has been confessed by others than representatives of Trinitarian communions, New Testament phraseology has a Trinitarian cast, in that it incloses a recurring reference to Father, Son, and Spirit. It may be contended, no doubt, that these three names can be understood as representing three aspects, or forms of manifestation, of one fundamental entity. But there is a double objection to this proposition. It implies that something

³¹ John iii, 5-8.

³² Rom. viii, 16.

³³ Rom. v, 5.

³⁴ John xv, 26, xvi, 13, 14.

³⁵ John xiv, 16-18, 26.

³⁶ Gal. v, 22, 23.

other than the personal serves as the background of the personal and is to be rated as the ultimate reality, whereas sound theistic philosophy will not admit that the personal is derivative or secondary. Furthermore the Scriptures give no countenance to the notion that there is anything back of the Divine Father to which He is related as a form of manifestation. On the contrary, He is Himself depicted as the ultimate, the eternal source whence issue eternally the Son and the Spirit. This representation might open an opportunity to characterize the Son and the Spirit as manifestations of the Father. In one sense they undoubtedly are. The important fact, however, is to be noted that the sense is not simply an impersonal one. The Bible assigns to the Son and the Spirit characteristics which we associate with personalities, and makes them subjects for fellowship with the Father. This is abundantly true of the former. The Spirit is not so definitely pictured as a subject for fellowship, but is assigned various characteristics belonging to personalities. Occasion, therefore, arises for asserting real distinctions in the Godhead, such distinctions as catholic Christian thought has counted it admissible to define as "personal," selecting this

term as the best approximation to a description of that which, as unique, is confessedly above the reach of full and exact exposition.

A trinitarian conception of this order is not destitute of support in the domain of reason or philosophy. It can be urged that in the creaturely sphere there is much to suggest the conclusion that a species of trinality is characteristic of the more complete being and the more complete process, and that accordingly the all-perfect Being may be presumed to be in a highly important sense trinal or triune. A more weighty consideration lies in a rational view of the demands of self-sufficiency in God. If He is to be accounted perfect in nature and experience, He must be regarded as having adequate resources in Himself for meeting all the demands of the infinitely perfect life. Among these demands the ethical rank foremost, and since love is central to ethical values it must be regarded as central to the life of God. But love demands fellowship, and perfect fellowship subsists only between persons who are essentially in the same plane. The infinite outflow of divine affection gets at once its suitable object and its suitable response only as there is a plurality of Divine Persons. Creatures in their imperfection and limitation

make an inadequate object. In spite of them a unipersonal God must remain forever in comparative solitude.

Philosophy has thus its word in behalf of the trinitarian representation. The most distinct basis, however, for that representation is contained in revelation. The Scriptures are permeated with the thought of Father, Son, and Spirit. A distinct trinality is unquestionably characteristic of God in the sphere of manifestation; and what is so thoroughly characteristic of God in the sphere of manifestation may rationally be supposed to be fundamentally grounded, in other words, to rest upon eternal and necessary distinctions.

It is by no means to be overlooked that such trinality as Christian thought affirms of God is entirely compatible with a fundamental unity. The trinality does not imply that there are independent Divine Persons. The Son does not exist, and cannot exist, apart from the Father any more than the radiance of light can exist after the extinction of the light. Equally the Holy Spirit cannot exist apart from the Father and the Son. Furthermore, all conflict in respect of feeling, willing and acting on the part of the Divine Persons is excluded. The Son can no more be at vari-

ance with the Father than perfect wisdom can contradict perfect wisdom, or perfect holiness contradict perfect holiness. In like manner there cannot be the least approach to disagreement between the Holy Spirit and the Father, or between the Holy Spirit and the Son. A harmony like that of the sweetest and most ravishing music—the incomparable symphony—ever prevails between these Divine Persons. God is not less a unity because He is a unity which includes diversity.

In connection with this theme dogmatic discretion will put a curb on the formulating propensity. To impose upon any one the torturing artificialities of the so-called “Athanasian Creed”³⁷ is to indulge in a most unwarrantable persecution. As is the case with all attempts to explore ultimate reality, the effort to expound the Trinity necessarily impinges upon profound mystery. Perhaps the best illustrative analogy to which we can appeal is to be found in the facts of divine immanence as very commonly recognized in enlightened religious thought. God, we may say, is immanent in us according to our very limited capacity. In the Son and the Spirit the Father

³⁷ It has long been recognized that Athanasius is to be excused from having had anything to do with it. An incomparably better specimen of creedal propriety is supplied by the Nicene Creed.

is immanent according to their measureless capacity. He is immanent in us by His own choice, upon which our very being depends. He is immanent in the Son and the Spirit by an eternal necessity.

CHAPTER V: THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING RESPECTING THE NATURE AND CONDITION OF MAN

I: The Biblical and Rational View of Man's Origin

A striking way of expressing his thought on the origin of man is employed by the author of the third Gospel. After running back the genealogy of Jesus to Adam, he defines this first man as the "son of God." In the first chapter of Genesis it is said that God made man in his own image and likeness. These two representations contain essentially the same meaning. They imply that man's advent into the world was determined by the intelligence and will of the Supreme Person, that he was endowed with intellectual and ethical attributes which reflect in important respects the nature of this Person, that accordingly the one is qualified for a relation of fellowship with the other analogous to that of the child with the father.

We may add that this is substantially all

that Christianity has any interest to establish respecting the primal origin of man. It cannot be seen to require more even if it be regarded as building distinctly upon a biblical basis. For, while the Bible as a whole ever keeps in view man's intimate relation with God, it does not rear any important superstructure upon the details of the story of creation and the first experiences of the human family. In fact, it almost wholly ignores them. The root ideas in these early narratives—such as the absolute supremacy of God, man's reflection of the divine nature in his intellectual and ethical being, the sanctity of marriage, and the initiation of moral evil by an abuse of freedom—are indeed built upon either implicitly or explicitly to a very considerable extent. But the case is quite otherwise with the circumstantial items. It is not discoverable that the Old Testament, aside from one or two uncertain instances,¹ refers back to a single special item contained in the creation narrative or in the account of the life in paradise. The New Testament preserves a nearly equal silence. Most of the few references to the first chapters of Genesis in which it indulges are simply for illustrative purposes. The reference which

¹ Job xxxi, 33; Hosea, vi, 7.

has by far the most doctrinal significance is that in which Paul contrasts Adam as the fountainhead of sin and death with the righteous and life-bearing Christ,² and here it is to be observed that the essential propriety of the reference is in no wise dependent upon any outward particulars of a primitive history. Let it be understood that Adam stands for the first man who was the first sinner of the race, and the Pauline argument would have just the same validity, even though a totally different environment from the one sketched in Genesis should be pictured for the first transgressor. That Paul spoke of him as Adam cannot, of course, be counted of any importance; in fact, "Adam" in the Hebrew is just a name for "man." In the recorded words of Christ the name of Adam is not so much as mentioned, nor is there a single distinct reference to any item associated with paradise or with the fall of the first parents. We are entirely warranted, therefore, in affirming that a theology which goes beyond the root ideas, or fundamental religious conceptions, of the first part of Genesis, and builds upon the special items of those primitive stories as necessary foundations, goes distinctly contrary to

² Rom. v, 12-19; 1 Cor. xv, 21, 22.

the example of the Bible itself. The real biblical system does not depend upon those items. They could be put out of sight without detracting from the grounds on which that system is approved to a rational faith.

What has been stated amounts to a declaration that Christianity has no occasion to quarrel with any theory of the origin of the race which the facts seem to demand. If continued investigation should thoroughly establish the doctrine of evolution as containing the true theory of the origin of organic nature, the result would be perfectly agreeable to Christianity. Evolution, as a scientific theory, does not contradict anything which the Christian religion is concerned to maintain. It may advise that certain picturesque details of the primitive stories respecting the world and its inhabitants should not be taken as literal description. But that is of the very slightest consequence. The thought of God as Creator is not damaged in the least by evolution theory pure and simple. For, obviously, method cannot take the place of an agent, and the scientific theory of evolution is simply a theory as to method. The Christian is perfectly free to assume that the evolutionary process is the method chosen of God for bringing in the ascending series of

organic forms; that He is the all-powerful and omnipresent agent who initiated the process, who controls its continuous operation, and who leads it on to results worthy of His wisdom and might.

As the doctrine of evolution in its 'proper character does not deny the personal Creator, nor curtail His glory, so it conflicts with nothing which Christianity is interested to affirm respecting man. Whatever may have been the antecedents of man, he must be judged to be what he gives evidence of being. A partial, essentially exterior, view of his antecedents can never afford any certain measure of his nature, as not necessarily including all that contributes to his constitution. Now science takes this partial view. It notes the apparent connection of things, or their relations in respect of time, place, and resembling features. The more interior bond of connection, the efficiency of the immanent Divine Agent, it cannot, in the use of its own resources, discover or adequately estimate. Leaving the field perfectly open for the operation of the efficiency in question, it evidently leaves it open for conveying to man, or bringing to manifestation in him, this or that characteristic over and above those which may be discoverable in his

antecedents. There is no good reason why he should be measured by his antecedents, at least to the exclusion of the one great antecedent, the efficiency of the immanent Divine Agent. In the working of that efficiency an intelligible basis is supplied for all the higher characteristics of man which distinguish him from other species of living beings, whatever may have been his historical relation to any of those species. Let the process be supposed to have taken account of this or that factor or link in the chain of organic life, the truth still remains, in full certitude and significance, that God made man to be a child of God.

It is not denied that the theory of evolution may be so construed as to compromise the dignity of man and to contradict the Christian view of his place and destiny. But in that case it becomes other than scientific. So long as the theory is not compounded with some sweeping assumption, borrowed from an adventurous anti-theistic philosophy, it antagonizes no real interest of the Christian religion. That religion may properly adopt a neutral attitude, being content with the well-approved conclusion that man came from God, and that each human individual is born potentially a child of God.

II: Man's Dual Nature

It is a ruling conception in the Scriptures that man is possessed at once of a sensuous and a supersensuous nature. The latter is described by various terms in both Testaments, notably by soul, spirit, and heart. A comparison of passages shows that, while these different terms do not have precisely the same range of significance, they are treated very largely as synonymous. The conclusion must be that the sacred writers employed them in a popular manner and without a thought of mapping out in a scientific way man's inner nature.

Paul, it may be granted, seems at first sight to present an exception. He shows quite generally a preference for the term "spirit" when speaking of man's higher nature. In certain connections also he makes a contrast between spirit and soul, to a relative disparagement of the latter. Thus in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians he puts the psychical (or soulish) man in very unfavorable comparison with the pneumatic (or spiritual) man. Such usage naturally suggests that Paul may have regarded man as a threefold being, or as possessed of body, soul, and spirit. But, on the other hand, it is to be noticed that the apostle

does not uniformly use the term soul in the restricted or unfavorable sense.³ In any case, he cannot be alleged to have dogmatically inculcated the threefold division of man's nature. As for the New Testament outside of the of the Pauline epistles, it not infrequently employs the word soul as if it were understood to embrace the entire supersensuous nature of man. We find, then, a certain ground for supposing only a relative distinction between soul and spirit, both terms having reference to the same supersensuous essence, but "spirit" being used prevailingly to name that essence in its higher or Godward relations, and "soul" being sometimes employed, though not constantly, to designate the same essence in its bodily or earthward connections. Taken as a whole, biblical teaching in no wise requires us to regard the soul as substantially distinct from the spirit and interposed between it and the body. It leaves us free to appeal to rational grounds in deciding between the dual and the threefold division, or, as the technical phrase runs, between dichotomy and trichotomy.

Approaching the subject on this basis we may readily discover reasons for preferring

³ Rom. ii, 9, xiii, 1; 2 Cor. i, 23; Phil. i, 27.

the twofold division. It is more simple and intelligible. Between spirit and matter, sharply contrasted as they are in every respect, we are quite unable mentally to construct any mean. If the soul, therefore, is made essentially distinct from the spirit we seem to be under compulsion to construe it as a kind of subordinate spirit functionally intermediate between the body and the higher spirit. But in this character the soul, unless made purely instrumental to the spirit, just as the body is, would seem to conflict with the demands of personal unity. Two real agents bound together with the body cannot seem to meet the requirements of a unitary subject. At any rate they complicate the problem of personal unity. On the other hand, two instruments connected with one agent would seem contradictory to the principle of economy. The spirit might just as well be thought of as operating in connection with the body at first hand as through the medium of the soul. So the intermediate factor is discredited as a superfluity, and the twofold division claims the rational preference.

From the Christian point of view man stands for the union of nature and spirit. The corporeal side of his being, though subordi-

nated to the spiritual, is treated with high appreciation. Nowhere does the Bible pass upon the body a disparaging or condemnatory sentence. It draws an antithesis, it is true, in not a few instances between man's physical being and the majestic order of being which belongs to God. But the contrast is between the frail and evanescent on the one hand and the mighty and enduring on the other, not the contrast between the evil and the good. So it is depicted by the Old Testament writers. Describing man from this point of view the Psalmist exclaims: "As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."⁴ As in this, so in all similar strains in the ancient Jewish oracles it is simply the frailty of man as a physical subject which is emphatically portrayed. No condemnation attaches to him in that character.

In the New Testament there is a line of expressions which might perhaps be taken as representative of a different point of view. Paul, it must be admitted, described the flesh in various connections in such disparaging terms as the most radical exponent of ascetic

⁴ Ps. ciii, 15, 16.

theory might be inclined to employ. "I know that in me," he says, "that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary to one another."⁵ What did Paul mean by such declarations? A whole group of considerations makes it incredible that he meant to condemn man's sensuous nature as in itself sinful. (1) The apostle includes in his catalogue of the works of the flesh various orders of sins which have no special association with the physical members. The natural inference is that by the flesh he meant something other than the mere instrument of the sensuous life. (2) The apostle indicates that he did not regard the flesh, in the character of material substance, to be intrinsically evil, inasmuch as he conceives Christ both to have come in the flesh and to have been sinless. (3) He plainly contradicts the supposition that the flesh is essentially evil by representing it to be a subject for sanctification. (4) Ample reason for believing that he repudiated the same supposition is found in the fact that he characterizes

⁵ Rom. vii, 18, viii, 7; Gal. v, 17.

the body as worthy to be quickened by the Spirit of God, as fit to be offered to God in sacrifice or consecration, as being the temple of the Holy Spirit, as being a subject together with the soul and spirit for complete sanctification.⁶

Before such an array of evidence it is impossible to escape the conclusion that Paul in the connections in which he seems to attach an evil sense to the flesh had much more in mind than the simple physical being of man. By the flesh he meant not merely the body, or its pliable substance, but the unregenerate man who is so apt to use the bodily members in unworthy gratifications.

In the measure of formal attention which Paul awards to the theme of the resurrection he pays greater tribute to the significance of the body than does any other New Testament writer. There is no occasion, however, to doubt that it was the common thought of the apostles and the entire early Church that the resurrection is to introduce men to an embodied existence. In some references to the resurrection, it may be granted, the stress is rather upon the coming forth of the dead into a sphere of vital existence than upon their

⁶ Gal. v, 19-21; Rom. i, 3; Phil. ii, 8; 2 Cor. v, 21, vii, 1; Rom. viii, 11, xii, 1; 1 Cor. vi, 19; 1 Thess. v, 23.

investment with bodies. This is true of prominent sayings of Christ.⁷ But stress upon the former point—undeniably by far the more important—involves no denial of the latter, so that there is a distinct balance in favor of regarding the latter as representative of the New Testament way of thinking. Nor can it be seen that Christianity, as a rational system, is concerned to avoid this alternative. External nature is a vast and glorious field. It affords a grand theater for the display of the immeasurable resources of wisdom, power, and beauty which belong to the Divine Artist. May it not be, then, that it pertains to the ideal life for man, that he should be related by means of a superior type of body to a natural sphere of a more excellent type than has yet been disclosed to his imperfect vision. Reason certainly cannot forbid us to look forward to such a consummation, if revelation invites our anticipations toward that goal.

III: Man's Title to Immortality

The evidence here adduced concerns the title normally belonging to man, and only that. It might be that the arguments which go

⁷ Matt. xxii, 23-32; Mark xii, 18-27.

to prove that immortality is the normal estate of all men depend upon qualities and relationships which can either be earnestly cultivated or rashly and stubbornly neglected and desecrated. In so far as they are conditioned in this way, it is evident that they can prove, not that all men will certainly possess immortality, but only that it is their appropriate and designed lot.

A proof for immortality which is of very long standing is based upon the noble order of faculties and the capacity for growth belonging to the human soul. A being capable of advancing along such high paths of knowledge and grand achievement ought not, it is legitimately felt, to be plunged into the endless night of cancelled or unconscious existence. The argument carries a strong persuasion, and ought to, for it is intrinsically weighty.

Combining with this proof, and indeed furnishing for it a reliable ground—as affording a pledge that man is not a subject for mockery or gratuitous disappointment—is the maximum evidence ever yet adduced. Stated in brief that proof is man's relation to God as held by genuine theism and especially Christian theism. Genuine theism predicates a living, working God who is sufficiently interested

in men to receive them into moral fellowship with Himself. As subjects of this fellowship they are logically candidates for an immortal life. Why should He who has immortality in Himself consign to dust and ashes those whom He has taken into moral fellowship? A more incongruous outcome could hardly be imagined. Hence we find generally that where men have entertained anything like a theistic faith, they have been constrained to believe in immortality. This motive was clearly operative in Israel. The prophetic conception of ethical fellowship with God did not permit the chosen people to rest upon the traditional notion of an empty life in Sheol, but urged them, as appears in later Judaism, to the hope of a vital existence in preparation beyond death and the grave. In the Gentile world also a kindred point of view has operated widely in the same direction.

If theism in general has this potency, how much more efficient to nurture a living faith in immortality must be Christian theism, the representation of God as He was depicted in the illuminated consciousness of Jesus Christ. The whole record of Christ's words, as we have them in the Gospels, is a testimony to the fact that the immortal life is the designed and the

appropriate destiny of men. Clear as the radiance of the brightest morning the truth shines forth that God stands to men as the Father in heaven, and that men are called to dwell before Him as children. They fall short of their birthright, and slide into an aberrant alienation, save as they entertain a vital filial consciousness toward God. Now what other language can this filial consciousness employ than that of the immortal hope? There is in truth no gainsaying of the argument of the apostle Paul, "If children, then heirs," heirs to something worthy of the paternal God to bestow, heirs to an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The Gospel portrait of God, as it emanated from the perfect filial consciousness of Jesus, positively forbids a doubt about the unfading inheritance in store for men.

In concentrating emphasis upon the theistic truth, as it was taught by our Lord, we by no means design to slight the import of His resurrection. It is our conviction, however, that the latter is auxiliary to the former rather than a satisfactory independent evidence. The mere fact of the resurrection of an individual would not necessarily guarantee the immortality of men generally. The great sig-

nificance of the resurrection of Jesus is that it publishes unmistakably the will and the purpose of the paternal God. In breaking the bonds of death for the Son of His love, He demonstrated in very apprehensible form, both His power and His intention to vanquish death in behalf of all who stand in filial relation to Himself. Taken in connection with the Gospel economy the triumph over the grave by the Captain of our salvation is a pledge of the triumph prepared for His followers. We are invited by the outstanding features of that economy to reckon ourselves joint heirs with Christ, and can repeat with all earnestness the words of the apostle Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."⁸

In the presence of the weighty proof which is furnished by theistic faith, and the divine pledge which is virtually afforded in the resurrection of Jesus, there seems very scanty propriety in attempting to supplement from the transactions of the séance room. What reliable evidence, in comparison, can the ghostly messages assumed to be whispered into the

⁸ 1 Peter i, 3.

ears of mediums, or the strange feats performed in the name of spirits, put into our possession? Expert investigators assure us that fraud has undoubtedly played a great part in these dimly-lighted transactions. They also render the judgment that many of the feats accomplished require no action of spirits, being sufficiently accounted for by super-normal powers, gifts of telepathy and clairvoyance, in the operating mediums. They further call attention to the fact that the spirits which are supposed to transmit the messages are evidently very limited or unreliable sources of information, since they contradict one another egregiously respecting the other world and its belongings. Finally, even suppose some messages from the dead, dictated through spirits, should arrive, they would be a token of nothing more than survival, not a proof of immortality. The lot of the dead might be, for all such proof, like that which the old Stoics assigned to them, namely, survival for a period only and then extinction of individual existence. Of really satisfactory proof of immortality the first installment remains yet to be made through this instrumentality.⁹

⁹In writing this section use has been made of portions of an article contributed to *Zion's Herald*.

IV: The Moral Outfit of Man

As a moral personality man has a distinctive endowment in conscience. The fact of conscience publishes that he is built into the moral order of the universe, and can never place himself outside of its domain. He may be moral, or he may be immoral, but so long as feeling and intelligence survive he cannot be simply non-moral.¹⁰

Conscience, if we take the term in the broad sense, includes three different elements: a perception of moral distinctions, a sense of obligation to the right as opposed to the wrong, and a feeling of self-approbation or self-condemnation according as the act corresponds, or fails to correspond, with the judgment of right and wrong.

The first of these three elements must be regarded as indubitably constitutional, not in the sense that a man has from the start a well-rounded faculty of moral judgment, but that there is implicit in his nature a basis of certain moral perceptions. The facts of his moral experience cannot be construed rationally on the supposition that he starts as a blank in respect

¹⁰ The exposition on this theme agrees in substance with that given by the author in his "System of Christian Doctrine," Methodist Book Concern, New York.

of his moral being, any more than his intellectual experience can be construed without a reference to positive mental constituents. Let it be granted that perversities of moral judgment often occur, and that education manifestly has a function to perform in relation to the moral sense; an original endowment in the direction of true moral perception is not thereby denied. Were there no such endowment there would be no adequate basis for a consensus of moral judgments. But there evidently is such a basis. Men cannot come into any largeness of ethical life without realizing an essential community of ethical principles through no inconsiderable range. Indeed, there can be no development or even existence of moral personality without the existence, virtual or explicit, of a certain order of moral judgments. He who could not see that the good will as opposed to the malicious will, where there is no knowledge of injury received, is obligatory, or that kindness ought to be repaid by gratitude instead of hatred, would be described rather as a monstrosity than a representative of genuine humanity. Certain other judgments fall under imperative sanctions wherever they are soberly and dispassionately considered. As Professor Sidg-

wick remarks: "The propositions, 'I ought not to prefer a present lesser good to a future greater good,' and 'I ought not to prefer my own lesser good to the greater good of another' do present themselves as self-evident; as much, for example, as the mathematical axiom that 'if equals be added to equals, the whole will be equals,' " ¹¹ Now, a moral perception which inevitably appears with the developing personality has just one adequate explanation. It is founded in man's moral constitution. To derive it from any order of external circumstances is to impute the greater to the less. As Professor A. B. Bruce has well argued it is not the product of social relations or heredity any more than rationality is the product of language.¹² It founds society. Without a certain community of moral perceptions on the part of its members, society would lack all true cohesion. It has, as society, no other authority than that of an aggregate of individual wills. If these wills are severally destitute of the guidance of certain moral perceptions, their aggregation can supply no trustworthy law of conduct. Society, as a moral community, can be constituted only out of units that have a common moral constituent.

¹¹ H. Sidgwick, "The Methods of Ethics," pp. 282, 283.

¹² "The Providential Order of the World," p. 39.

That it does not make the morality of the individual, but has its moral character in its members, is clearly enough seen in the fact that, occasionally, a small company of earnest men, or even a single individual of exceptional character and gifts, will successfully challenge society on some special point and start the public current toward an improved moral perception.

The point of view which is here being urged cannot properly be regarded as prejudiced by the assignment of a large rôle to evolution. Morality is not made to appear in consequence as unfixed or fortuitous. Evolution is not necessarily accounted a haphazard thing, something irreconcilable with the constitutional. Rather evolution has its basis in an intelligent world-ground, which is bent upon securing that the outcome of the historical process shall be righteousness, and to this end works toward such a common stock of convictions as makes men truly men, beings capable of moral association. To possess this stock belongs to their idea or pattern. With their normal development it is certain to be theirs, and in that sense is constitutional. If God is a living God, if He entertains any ends at all, instead of resting in deistic indif-

ference, He must ordain an end of this kind, so that morality is not left in the field of the purely undirected or contingent.

The constitutional character of the second element of conscience must be regarded as at least equally well established. Every man, whom his fellows would venture to rate as of sound mind, is certain that there is a right and a wrong, and that he is obligated to follow the one to the rejection of the other. This conviction, too, has its own distinctive character. An attempt to translate it into something else is sure to result in an unrecognizable substitute. It is not assuredly another name for desire and aversion founded on contrasted experiences of the pleasurable and the painful. The question of ethics is not what pleases, but what *ought* to please. Doubtless there is an underlying faith in every healthy spirit that, in the ultimate issue, righteousness cannot be really divorced from blessedness, and an opposite conviction would be disheartening. But that by no means involves the conclusion that a man's personal bearing toward right and wrong is simply his bearing toward that which is esteemed pleasurable or painful. It implies that one outlook is more inspiring than another, and so better suited to sustain a high

sense of duty. The fact is that in the common perception of men right and wrong on the one hand and pleasure and pain on the other, stand for things widely separated in meaning. As Professor Münsterberg puts the case: "Our moral consciousness affirms immediately that when we are carried by moral will, we do not aim at goals, whose value is determined by personal like or dislike. When we will the morally good, we do indeed wish that the good also give us joy, but we know that it is not the good simply because it gives us pleasure."¹³

The third element in conscience is unmistakably disclosed as having a constitutional basis. Why should a man ever be at variance with himself, or torture his own soul with accusations? Whence comes this swift sentence which breaks through all sophistical excuses and reveals a man to himself as condemned when he has done despite to any maxim which he recognizes when in a dispassionate frame of mind? It must in all reason be construed as the offspring of a nature that is intrinsically moral, as the reaction of the constitutional in man against the element of personal caprice. Nothing adventitious could react with such potency and persistence. By a merciful pro-

¹³ "The Eternal Values," p. 39.

vision conscience often requites an offense with repeated strokes. By the sharpness of its rebuke it would save from a worse punishment. Very likely when we read the graphic sketch which the genius of Shakespeare has given of the way in which the inward monitor smote the queen who had been accessory to the murder of the aged Duncan, we are made to feel that here is a specimen of the most direful results of violence to its behests. But this is not so. The hand of Lady Macbeth repeatedly addressed to crime will at length cease to offend and torture her by its exhibit of the indelible blood stain. In this very thing lies the most somber aspect of the subject, that conscience stubbornly abused will not fail to avenge itself by the penalty of an apathy or paralysis which at its acme involves nothing less than moral suicide.

There is no design in what has been said to minify the function of education in relation to conscience. It has an important function. But it is just because there are constitutional elements to work upon that there is a chance for anything like a consistent and successful education. Were there not constitutional aptitudes in men for recognizing mathematical truths, education could not make mathemati-

cians of them any more than it can teach animals to extract the square root of numbers or to ascertain the circumferences of circles. Education does not create. Its task is rightly to develop the germs of already existing capacities and powers. Man is a proper subject for moral education because he has an original or constitutional outfit in the distinctive elements of conscience.

The declaration has sometimes been made that conscience is the voice of God in man. To speak thus is not altogether unwarranted. While conscience cannot be so described without qualifications, on account of the element of contingency in a large number of moral judgments, it is the bearer of a divine message. It profoundly emphasizes the truth that man is the subject of a moral order, which in the ultimate analysis must be identified with God's order. In its normal development it brings man more and more toward the plane of divine thought and feeling in respect of moral distinctions. From the standpoint of the Christian view of intercommunion between the human and the divine it may be regarded as touched and vitalized in all its elements by the Divine Spirit.

V: Man's Gift of Freedom

In so far as the facts of conscience exhibit man as a responsible moral personality they demonstrate his freedom. The indispensable condition of responsibility is freedom in the sense of a power of choice between alternatives. A mere instrument is not responsible. Now a man who from the start is shut up to a particular act, or series of acts, with no power to vary the result, is not an agent but an instrument pure and simple. The true agent, if there be any agent in the case, is the one who so fashioned him and adjusted him to his environment as to secure in all its details the actual outcome. It makes no difference where the determining factor is located, whether within or without the man. So long as it is viewed as being in origin entirely outside of his option it leaves him a mere instrument. The fact that he is a conscious instrument, or an instrument endowed with a faculty of reason, cannot be reckoned an element in his responsibility, so long as he is simply an instrument, any more than the quality of its metal can be charged against an ax. No namable quality or faculty in him which does not bring into

view a power to vary the result can convey any rational suggestion of responsibility.

The claim which has sometimes been made by the necessitarian that actions irrespective of their causes are good or bad in their nature, and so commendable or blamable, will not endure inspection. The claim confounds two very distinct things. Certain orders of conduct and disposition undoubtedly are always obnoxious to unperverted sentiment. A ferocious disposition in a man can never be pleasing to contemplate. Neither is such a disposition pleasing to contemplate in a wild beast which has it by the simple gift of nature. No one, however, undertakes, because of it, to pass a sentence of moral reprobation against the beast. In like manner the man would not be liable to a sentence of moral reprobation for a ferocious disposition given to him outright in all its strength; neither would he be liable to such sentence for acts strictly necessitated by the disposition. The æsthetic sense would continue to pronounce both the beast and the man unpleasing, not to say horrible. The moral sense, on the other hand, could not condemn either of them. The claim of the necessitarian overlooks the wide distinction between

an æsthetic judgment and a moral judgment proper.

The advocate of necessitarianism is quite apt to criticize the doctrine of freedom as doing violence to the law of causality, since it supposes that the will can act without being caused to act. But in bringing forward this objection he ignores the unique character of the *personal* cause. It is the grand distinction of personality, the high prerogative which lifts it above the plane of mere things, that it has the power of initiation. To deny this is to affront the spontaneous conviction of men, to turn responsibility into an insoluble enigma, and to leave God Himself perfectly helpless as respects the direction of His own action.

The determinist is not to be blamed for setting much store by the principle of causality. But he carries out the principle in a too wholesale fashion, not sufficiently noting the wide distinction between the domain of persons and that of things. As James Ward has remarked: "That every event must have a cause we may allow to be axiomatic, but not that the same cause—the same efficient cause, that is—must always produce the same effect."¹⁴ In other words, personality is, as it has been

¹⁴ "The World of Ends or Pluralism and Theism," Lecture XIII.

described, a pluripotential cause, not tied to one sole issue, in a given connection, but able within limits to vary the result. A recognition of this point of view is implied in these sentences from the pen of Josiah Royce: "Whatever is unique is as such not causally explicable. The individual as such is never the mere result of Law."¹⁵

A further objection of the determinist, namely, that action is characterless, unless it is determined by antecedent character, is urged with no better right. A man can choose in the light of motives without being strictly determined by them. According as he follows the superior or the inferior motive his choice is morally good or bad. If he makes a choice either better or worse in any degree than his antecedent character, his choice, so far from being characterless, is a character-making action. It is just in this way that men improve or deteriorate in character and retain responsibility for their personal development.

The advocate of freedom has an advantage over the necessitarian in that his theory is agreeable to the appearances of things. Men appear to themselves to be free in a great number of actions, and their fellows seem also

¹⁵ "The World and the Individual," I, p. 467.

repeatedly to be in the exercise of real choice. At the same time it is forced upon their observation that motives exert a mighty pressure, and that antecedent character is very likely to shape the direction of the will, so that in relation to much that occurs there is a certain appearance of determinism. Now the champion of freedom is in no wise precluded from recognizing both orders of appearances. He is not required to minify the pressure of motives or to count for naught the force of antecedents. All that his theory requires is that he should hold fast to the conclusion that men are not absolutely shut up to a predetermined course, that they can and do betimes exercise a real faculty of alternativity. On the other hand, the determinist allows the occurrence of no free acts whatsoever. His theory has this unhappy result, that it constrains him to flout one side of appearances.

Freedom in the sense under consideration, or as a power of choosing between alternatives, is repeatedly implied in the biblical picture of man and his relations. But the Bible makes large account of freedom in a different sense. It uses the term to denote not merely a faculty of alternativity, or power of varying the result in a given instance, but also to describe the

large, unhindered, untrammelled life which belongs to him who is in harmony with the moral ideal, whose will is fused into oneness with the supreme standard. In technical phrase this is designated *real* freedom as distinguished from *formal*. Christ gave expression to it when He said: "If ye abide in my words, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."¹⁶ It is the freedom of righteousness as opposed to the enslavement of sin, the freedom of the child whom the master of the house is glad to honor as a child, the freedom which the Head of the universe is ready and able to secure to the one who chooses the line of His holy will and purpose.

VI: Man's Actual Condition as Compared with the Ideal

While the sacred writings of Christianity greatly honor man in their conception of his origin, his destination to an immortal life, and his investment with moral and religious capacities that qualify him for the citizenship of a divine kingdom and the fellowship of a divine household, they do not speak in flattering terms of his actual condition. They describe

¹⁶ John viii, 31, 32.

him in fact, as weak, temptable, born with a tendency to go astray, and competent to reach a worthy destiny only through struggle and the merciful assistance of a divine hand. In truth, it is a rather somber picture which the Scriptures present of the actual moral and religious condition of the race.¹⁷

Nevertheless, it must be said, in justice to the facts, that the biblical picture of man's condition is not so somber, by a number of degrees, as that which has had considerable currency in the Christian Church since the time of Augustine. One of the blackest strokes in the Augustinian representation, namely, that which depicts the entire race as born under condemnation because of Adam's trespass, cannot fairly be said to have any place in the biblical teaching. The Old Testament never once insinuates the notion that Adam's sin was charged upon his posterity, and that accordingly every one of them is born into the world under the shadow of the divine displeasure. It speaks indeed in some connections of the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the children, and it is possible that one or another of the ancient writers thought of this visitation

¹⁷ Gen. vi, 5, 11-13, viii, 21; 1 Kings viii, 46; Job iv, 17-19, xiv, 4, xv, 14-16, xxv, 5, 6; Ps. xiv, 1-3, li, 5, liii, 1-3, cxliii, 2; Prov. xx, 9; Eccl. vii, 20; Isa. lxiv, 6; John iii, 6; Rom. iii, 9-12, 23, v, 12; Eph. ii, 3.

as implying not only the transmission of afflictive consequences but also of condemnation. If that, however, was their understanding in any case, it represented an inferior point of view which the Old Testament outgrew and distinctly repudiated.¹⁸

In the New Testament there is no language which a sound exegesis requires us to construe as implying transmitted condemnation or hereditary guilt. Two or three references of Paul, it is true, have a verbal affiliation with the Augustinian doctrine. Still a complete survey of his statements provides a good warrant for a different understanding of his doctrinal position. It is found that the connection which he makes between the sin of Adam and his posterity means only that the sin of the first parent was a bad beginning which *tended* to make all men sinners, just as the righteous obedience of Christ was a good beginning which *tended* to make all men righteous. In his fervid rhetorical representation tendency stands for the condition toward which it reaches. It is not necessary to suppose that he thought of men as actually sinning in Adam's trespass any more than he thought of men as actually dying to sin in

¹⁸ Deut. xxiv, 16; 2 Kings xiv, 6; Prov. ix, 12; Jer. xxxi, 29, 30; Ezek. xviii, xxxiii, 10-20.

the crucifixion of Christ. That he was free to use the latter form of expression is made manifest by his recorded words.¹⁹

It hardly needs to be added that if the scriptural teaching does not enforce the idea of birth into a state of guilt, there is absolutely nothing that does. No shadow of rational justification can be offered for the notion of antenatal sin or hereditary guilt. Heredity may indeed be a factor of very appreciable moment. It can be supposed to work in many cases for a disturbance of emotional balance, and so for the impairment of conduct. But the transmission in this way of adverse tendency is quite another thing than the transmission of guilt. Of the latter no rational account can be given. To hold men responsible for the fault of Adam, because they were potentially in him at the time of his trespass, would be about as reasonable as to hold them responsible for some apparent flaw in the world because forsooth they were potentially in the Creator at the time of creation. No more reasonable would it be to maintain that Adam stood as the representative of the race, and that God was pleased to charge the sin of the representative upon the party represented. Sin is a thor-

¹⁹ Rom. vi, 6 ; 2 Cor. v, 14 ; Gal. ii, 20.

oughly personal act, and in relation to it no man can be represented by another, so as to incur the guilt of another's act. As well suppose men to exchange souls as to take the guilt of one another.

We conclude, then, that the true Christian teaching affirms simply that men are born with tendencies to sin. Universally they exhibit a great facility in going astray, and also very generally more or less of a real bent to a faulty course. There is no slightest ground for charging them with guilt until they appropriate and follow out the adverse tendencies into personal transgression. As to the strength of the misleading impulses, it would be nothing less than a veritable hyperbole of pessimistic speech to describe them under the name of "total depravity." So extravagant a slander against the race ought never to have been perpetrated. On the other hand, it is a superficial optimism which makes small account of the evil strain. Elements of good enter into the natural condition of every man; but abundant facts demonstrate that in men's lives there is a current which bears strongly in the wrong direction, an unhappy facility of going wrong. The one who lives apart amid amiable surroundings, confined to the society of

agreeable friends, may possibly be inclined to think that it is a mean and unwarranted insinuation against human nature to suppose men generally to have any bent to folly and sin. But let him resolutely grapple with men, and attempt to move individuals or communities from unmistakable evil and corruption up to the plane of consistent righteousness, and he will quickly come to realize that it is no mild current of wayward tendency that he confronts. Who that touches real life is ignorant of the appalling force with which a single moral distemper in a community resists restraint or remedy? To break, for example, the league of avarice and appetite which sustains the liquor traffic is, under the usual conditions, like the task of removing mountains. It is only by great watchfulness, stress, and effort that the evils of society are kept from passing on to dire extremes. The pains, the wrestlings, and often even the shed blood, of the elect children of God are in demand for crowding back the continually reappearing forces of animalism, unfeeling greed, and headlong selfishness. The idea of man is noble, and it is a lofty destiny to which he is called; but his condition is not such that he is likely to reach that destiny by any easy holiday march.

CHAPTER VI: THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING RESPECTING THE PERFECTING OF THE INDIVIDUAL

I: Constituents of the Ideal Set before the Individual

The theme with which we are dealing in this connection might be described in other terms as the doctrine of salvation. To gain the Christian ideal is to gain salvation in the fullest sense of the word.

A thoroughly vital conscience may be specified as the first constituent or factor of the Christian ideal. There is no good ground to build upon in the man who lacks a keen sense of personal obligation, or who is too obtuse in moral sensibilities to feel the smart and degradation of known transgressions. Reverence for moral order, conviction of its worth, and inward election of its standard lie at the basis of all true character. There is doubtless such a thing as a morbid conscientiousness. But this does not mean that a man is liable to have

a larger and deeper moral sensibility than he ought to have. There is absolutely no danger on that side. The morbid element comes not from an excess of sensibility, but from lack of a healthy common sense, to give direction to scruples or to connect them with an appropriate subject-matter. It were good for a man to have a conscience as sensitive to the blot of personal misconduct as is the eye to the presence of a foreign substance. To ignore this demand for a lively, energetic conscience, or to imagine that there is any path around it to the Christian ideal, is to indulge in a complete illusion. One might fitly imitate the language of the apostle Paul and say: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though I have visions and ecstasies and the most transcendent flights of soul, and have not a stanch and active conscience which holds me tenaciously to my duty, I am an empty pretender.

A second constituent of the Christian ideal is freedom through inner conformity to the standard of duty. This means not merely that there is a decided election, through force of will, of the standard acknowledged to be obligatory, but also that this choice is so far supported by the sympathies and affections that

allegiance can be given thereto cheerfully and gladly. To a large degree it is half-heartedness that makes shackles and keeps up the sense of painful striving. No doubt, under ordinary earthly conditions almost any one is likely to find steep places in the path of duty, obligations which, if really met, must be met in the face of a strong inner reluctance. To triumph over this reluctance is, beyond question, a sign of strength and nobility. Still, to keep on doing duty with harassment of spirit is not the ideal way. The old Hebrew prophets saw as much when they pictured a golden era to come, in which the house of Israel should have the law written upon their hearts. The like point of view is emphatically set forth in the New Testament. The goal toward which the teaching of Christ and the apostles directs is freedom under law, liberty in the face of obligation, because law and obligation are taken into the region of the heart life and transfigured by the power of holy affections. That teaching sets duty exceedingly high, but it represents its hard features as ultimately melting away in the fervid rays of an impassioned love.

Once more the ideal to which Christianity calls the individual includes, as has been in-

timated on preceding pages, the filial relation and disposition toward God. That this is the crowning attainment will not be disputed by one who properly understands its meaning. Who indeed can conceive of anything more beautiful, noble, and kingly for a man than to possess the character and to stand in the relation of a child of God, being filled with trust and love toward Him, reposing upon His fatherly goodness, and entering with free-hearted zeal into the fulfillment of His holy purposes? The life most mean and barren outwardly is made inexpressibly rich by such an attainment. And it is made all the richer because the high and precious relation with God works effectively toward a thoroughly brotherly relation to men as actual or possible children of God. Those whom God owns the child of God cannot consistently disown. As certainly, therefore, as the true child of God sends out the heart to Him in trust and love, he will have a sympathetic interest in his fellows. He can make no disjunction between the law of supreme love to God and the law of equal love to the neighbor.

So comprehensive in its import is the filial character just described that this phase of the Christian ideal may be regarded as implicitly

containing all the rest. Where that character has been established in rounded perfection every fruit of the spirit must abound—love, joy, peace, long suffering, meekness, and all the rest of the glorious train. We therefore choose a formula as fitting as it is brief when we say: The ideal of Christian attainment is the realization of the standing, character and conduct of a true child of God.

II: Universality of the Call to the Christian Ideal

The natural presupposition is that the Christian ideal of character and relationship is set before all men as an object of possible attainment, and that it is the unfeigned desire of God and of all good beings that every son and daughter of the race should ultimately possess the incomparable treasure. It is absolutely impossible to think of any attribute in God which should make it an object of desire on His part that any man should fail of an ideal character. The hazard of failure may be unavoidably involved in a possible abuse of freedom; but that God on His side should actually prefer to have any one make a wrong and ruinous use of his freedom is inconceivable. As the absolute love He must desire

the well-being, the essential good or blessedness, of those whom He has made in His own image. Since He is the absolutely righteous, it must be a matter of infinite preference on His part that all free beings should become thoroughly established in righteousness. Augustine indeed argued that God had a motive for willing that men should be divided into the two classes of the elect and the reprobate, in order that He might display His compassionate love to the one party, and show forth His severity and justice upon the other. But this representation simply eclipses the ethical nature of God. Love and justice which are subject, as respects their direction, to fiat are not love and justice, but mere arbitrariness or caprice. A man who out of a number of equally deserving children should elect one-half to be subjects of unsparing severity would not be taken as a pattern either of parental love or justice; he would rather be counted an example of appalling eccentricity.

In the natural sphere there is undoubtedly a kind of election to life or success on the one hand, and to failure on the other. Out of a totality of germs in almost any area which may be observed only a part ever attain unto mature growth and fruitage. Plainly, however,

it will not do to cite this order of facts as indicative of God's procedure with beings whom He has made capable of holding to Himself the relation of children. A far more suitable analogy is found in the sphere of man's family life. As the earthly father is required by his relation not to treat any of his children with indifference, it is to be presumed that the Father in heaven does not look upon any human beings who are born into His world as objects simply of indifference or despite.

Coinciding with the rational presupposition is the whole sum of evidence in the Bible for the universal fatherhood of God. That evidence has already been reviewed and found to be large and unequivocal. It was noticed that the same Christ who claimed identity of disposition with the Father showed an earnest desire to win every man, and distinctly taught that the one remotest from God in character and life, who might still be gained, was to Him an object of genuine solicitude. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the very tone and pith of the gospel carry the conclusion that the Christian ideal was meant for every man, and that all heaven with perfectly sincere and undivided voice calls thereto.

The passages in the New Testament which

can be cited against the common Christian vocation and opportunities of men can be explained as strong expressions of God's sovereignty, of man's fundamental dependence upon Him, and of the impossibility of binding His will by any self-chosen scheme on the part of men. They picture so graphically God's part in the issues of men's lives that for the time being the modifying agency of the human factor is left unnoticed. But it is not meant to be denied. The total representation of any sacred writer, who has expressed himself with moderate fullness, indicates this very clearly. Take, for example, the case of Paul in that most stalwart passage of his, the ninth chapter of Romans. He speaks here as though men were to God no more than the clay to the potter, as though it lay entirely within His discretion whether they should be fashioned unto honor or dishonor. But notice, in the first place, the character and claims of the men whom Paul had in mind. They were Jews who assumed in virtue of ancestral privileges to have a special lien on God's favor, men who scorned the idea that the Gentiles should be placed on an equality with themselves. The apostle thought it necessary to cast down into the dust this high pretension. He therefore

paints in the strongest colors God's sovereignty and the utter futility and foolishness of attempting to bind Him by such grounds of distinction and precedence as men may choose to recognize. Notice, in the second place, that Paul before the end of his argument, as appears in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the epistle, corrects any impression of divine arbitrariness which might be drawn from his oratorical outburst. He speaks of that portion of Israel which he described as reprobate, broken off from the true stock, as capable of being grafted in again. Indeed he hopes that the temporary hardening and rejection of Israel will result in an extraordinary extension of salvation among both Jews and Gentiles. "A hardening in part hath befallen Israel," he says, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved."¹ Thus the ultimate picture sketched by the apostle is not that of a divine sovereignty which arbitrarily casts men away, but rather of a divine sovereignty which rules and overrules events, to the end that the greatest possible number may be made partakers of everlasting life. In an earlier passage of the same epistle,² wherein he speaks of the obedi-

¹ Rom. xi, 25, 26.

² Rom. v, 18.

ence of Christ as offsetting the disobedience of Adam and bringing the gifts of grace to all men, he attributes the same universality to God's benevolent purpose. The tenor of his conviction is also indicated in those passages of his epistles which refer to Christ as dying for all, and describe the gospel ministry as designed by God to reconcile the world unto Himself.³

In relation to John's writings it will be found in like manner that any appearance of limitation put upon God's benevolent designs for men is corrected or offset in the total representation. The prize of salvation is declared to be for every man who will repent and believe on the Saviour. "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him."⁴ "And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come; he that will let him take of the water of life freely."⁵

³ 2 Cor. v, 15, 19; 1 Tim. ii, 4-6; Titus, ii, 11.

⁴ John iii, 16, 17.

⁵ Rev. xxii, 17. Criticism is not unanimous for the judgment that the book containing this passage came from the author of the fourth Gospel; but the cited passage in no wise misrepresents his standpoint.

*III: Conditions which the Individual Must Fulfill
in Starting toward the Ideal*

The prominence of the filial relation and character in the Christian ideal indicates clearly what must be the primary condition of its realization. For, in the nature of the case nothing can be more indispensable to the relation and character of a true child than faith. There is then no legitimate cause for surprise in the fact that the Bible makes so much of faith. It would need to make less of the vocation of men as children of God, if it were to make less of faith. Take a living faith out of the filial character, and the character left will be anything but filial.

The teachings of Christ do not lack sentences which directly emphasize the virtue and indispensableness of faith. It is pictured as the medium of salvation, as the power which is able to remove mountains, and to which nothing is impossible.⁶ Still we gain but an imperfect view of the stress upon faith in Christ's teaching if we confine ourselves to instances of explicit mention. The indirect inculcation of faith is quite as cogent as the direct. We may observe it in the whole strain

⁶ John vi, 29; Luke vii, 50; Matt. xvii, 20.

of reference to God as the Father in heaven whose minute and tender oversight banishes occasion for anxious care; in the parable which puts the humility and deep sense of dependence upon the divine clemency exhibited by the publican in contrast with the self-satisfaction of the Pharisee; in the declaration that entrance into the kingdom of heaven requires the childlike disposition; and in the representation that the genuine and fruit-bearing disciple is the one who abides in the Christ as the branch in the vine.

An equal prominence is given to faith in the apostolic teaching which finds expression in the Epistles of the New Testament. Salvation by faith, as opposed to salvation by legal performances, may be described as the leading theme of Paul's discourse. The following are but specimen sentences: "We reckon that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."⁷ "The law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor. For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."⁸ Taken out of the field of the existing

⁷ Rom. iii, 28.

⁸ Gal. iii, 24-26.

controversy, and translated into more general terms, Paul's contention amounts to the truth, that the inner disposition is the fundamental condition of salvation, for which no amount of external performances is any substitute, and that the proper inner disposition is that spirit of sonship which naturally comes from a true acceptance of the message of God in Christ.

By what has already been said it has been intimated that faith, in the proper religious sense, means much more than mere belief or intellectual assent. It denotes a positive practical relation to an object with which more or less of an ideal character is associated, an attitude of genuine self-committal to that object. Now the highest object, the supreme ideal, as known to the Bible and to good philosophy, is a Divine Person. From their point of view, then, faith must mean an act or an attitude of self-committal to a Divine Person. In its specifically Christian signification it may be defined as the act or attitude of self-committal to God as revealed in Christ. We say "act" or "attitude," since faith may be viewed either as an act or as a standing habit or disposition which the act initiates. The principal stress, of course, falls upon the latter. The supreme and immediate object of faith is

a person and not a message. Some sort of a message may be necessary for outlining to the mind the person who is the object of faith. Still the real object of heart-reliance is the person, and the message first becomes a matter for affectionate appropriation when it is viewed, not as the message of a distant and unrelated person, but of one with whom in our inmost being we are linked. Any intelligent person may render a sort of intellectual appreciation to the divine message in the Scriptures and perhaps also give to it some degree of heart response. But still it is true that only the one who comes to the Father in heaven, and makes the filial self-committal to Him, gains the proper standpoint for an adequate appreciation of the message. The bond with the Person involves at once a bond of sympathetic connection with all that which is regarded as reflecting the mind of the Person.

As a principle of action, or practical realization, faith stands in a harmonious relation to reason. The one attains what the other approves. Reason certainly dictates a trustful self-committal to the Being in whom are limitless power and benevolence; faith consummates this self-committal. Reason also dictates the acceptance of whatever fairly ap-

proves itself as reflecting the mind of this Divine Person; faith cordially accepts that much, and counts itself as holden to nothing more. It never imposes a demand for blind or irrational assent.

In the point of view of Christianity the directing of faith toward Christ is important. He stands as the authentic messenger of God, central to the manifestation of God which has intrinsically the highest spiritual potency. For faith to go out to Him means, therefore, for it to take the path of the highest saving efficacy. It is beyond question the normal course for it to take. But from this fact we are not allowed to infer that specific faith in Christ as set forth in the New Testament is an imperative condition of salvation. Christ came to facilitate salvation, not to raise against it a technical barrier. The man to whom he has not been disclosed is not shut out from Him by lack of formal Christian faith, provided there is a distinct leaning in his spirit toward the ideal for which Christ stands. Such a man may be expected when Christ is truly revealed to him as the Head of redeemed humanity gladly to recognize Him as his Lord.

The description which has been given of faith prepares for a proper rating of what may

be called the secondary conditions of entrance into the way of salvation, the way that leads to the Christian ideal. These are repentance and evangelical obedience, the latter of which denotes obedience to the ethical and religious code of the gospel. Repentance may be defined as sorrow for misdoing together with a positive purpose of amendment. In this significance it is plainly secondary to faith. No one turns away from a soiled and imperfect past except in favor of something better, except under the solicitation of a higher ideal. Some measure of inward assent to that ideal is logically antecedent to the act of turning away from the opposite. Faith, therefore, as self-committal, to a superior object of trust and obligation lays the basis for repentance. The former term expresses the positive element in a transaction or state of which the latter names the negative element. In the one you have the idea of association with a Divine Person, in the other the idea of that recession from evil which is the necessary counterpart of a holy association.

It is easy to see also that in relation to evangelical obedience faith is the primary or root principle. As trustful self-committal to a Divine Person it is itself a kind of compre-

hensive inward obedience. It is the vital disposition of obedience lying back of specific acts of obedience. Without the vital disposition there would be no true obedience, but only perfunctory or mercenary performances. Nevertheless, it will not do to attach a slight significance to specific acts of obedience. If, on the one hand, it is true that the inner disposition denoted by the word "faith" must be at the heart of specific acts in order that they may have genuine religious worth, it is true, on the other hand, that the inner disposition, for its own maintenance and development, needs to go out in specific acts. Just as it tends to lassitude in a man's will power, if he does not go out upon the field of this world's affairs and grapple with actual conditions, so faith divorced from appropriate lines of activity lacks a requisite of healthy growth and indeed of subsistence. Faith is all-sufficient in the sense that it puts one at once in a normal or filial relation with God. But it would deny itself if it did not inspire to good works with the coming of opportunities for their performance.

IV: The Divine Response and Coöperation

Divine agency goes before, accompanies, and follows the acts of the individual whereby

he turns toward the Christian ideal, or enters the way of salvation. It goes before those acts as graciously prompting to them. It accompanies them as a means of continuous incentive and support. It follows them in the bestowment of the great benefits appropriate to the new life chosen by the believing, penitent, and obedient person. We express the essential character of these benefits when we affirm that for such a one God improves His opportunity to give practical realization to the filial relation. If we wish to use language more distinctly theological, we designate the benefits by the terms justification, regeneration, and assurance.

Viewed as to its composition the word "justification" may be understood to mean making just or righteous. But in common usage it is employed in the sense of "pronouncing just." The scriptures undoubtedly employ it in not a few instances in the latter sense, and it subserves the end of distinguishing it from regeneration to confine it to that meaning. Taken thus it denotes the favorable judgment, the attitude of gracious welcome which God extends to the one who through faith comes to possess the germ of the filial character. Such a person may be far from being actually per-

fect. But God sees that in earnest intention he has parted from the evil of the past, that his faith is a potentiality of righteousness which connects him with the ideal, and that he only needs to go on in the path which he has entered in order to attain ultimately to the unblemished standard. He therefore takes pleasure in him, counts the evil of his past a bygone, and sincerely receives and approves him. This is justification, the pardon or forgiveness bestowed by God. It is gracious and benevolent, but in no wise artificial. It declares no man other than he is. It is simply the favorable response of the heavenly Father to the one who through faith is preparing to act the part of a dutiful child of His.

Justification, as the forgiving and approving sentence of God, may be said to be done *for* a man. Regeneration denotes the effect, which, at the time of justification, is wrought *in* a man. In considering the nature of this spiritual birth or renewal we need to combine two different views. The one is a stanch conception of the divine immanence. All earnest theism teaches this. It requires us to think of our lives as insphered in God, to recognize a fundamental dependence upon Him both in respect of the physical and the spiritual. The

other conception is that God respects the constitution of human souls, and will never deal with them as mere things. Putting these two conceptions together we reach the idea of a spiritual energy, subtle and powerful, but gentle in its method, assisting a man to go in the direction of his own better choice, intensifying his resolution against evil, strengthening his love for the good, clarifying his vision of the things of supreme worth, consoling and stimulating him with a sense of high and holy relationships. This is the power of regeneration. It does not force or drive. It does not put any new faculty into a man. As a gentle yet mighty agent, it comes to the assistance of a man in his turning toward the ideal, and helps him to attain the habitual purpose and feeling which befit him as the citizen of a spiritual kingdom and the child of a spiritual household. Regeneration may be supernatural, but we have no more reason to consider it unnatural than we have so to consider the divine immanence. If God is really near to human spirits and able to touch them, why should not the virtue of His presence be specially operative in one who opens to Him the avenues of his spiritual nature by an act of trustful self-surrender? It is impossible to think otherwise

without abandoning the central Christian conception of God and of His relation to men.

There is a liability of setting the truth of regeneration in a false light by making the term to stand for a marked crisis in consciousness. The crisis does occur not infrequently. But it is the accident, not the essential. A man who blocks up the avenues of divine approach to himself, and stubbornly resists the work of grace, not unnaturally experiences, when he does give way, a very decided emotional crisis, especially if he be a man of highly emotional bent. But his experience is no standard for judging that of others. Daylight is no less daylight because it may arrive by imperceptible advances. So the state of filial trust in God and of decided cheerful purpose to please Him is the regenerate state, under whatever conditions it may have been reached.

A very close association with regeneration may properly be given to assurance, by which is meant a more or less luminous conviction of an individual that he stands before God as an accepted child. Beyond all fair question such a conviction is an appropriate factor in a Christian consciousness. If it be actually the supreme vocation of a man to be a child of God, then in all consistency he ought to come

to feel as a child of God. It would be decidedly out of harmony with his filial relation to doubt the friendly attitude of God toward himself. By no possibility could a doubt of that sort be agreeable to God or conformable to His plan. If God thinks it worth while to work toward the filial character in a given individual, then He must think it worth while to work toward the filial consciousness in him, or the inward conviction that he has the standing of an accepted child.

This rational induction has the clear support of the Scriptures. "Because ye are sons," says Paul, "God sent forth the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."⁹ "On whom," says Peter, "though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."¹⁰ Equally suggestive of a positive realization of divine relationships are the words of Christ spoken in connection with His promise of the Comforter: "He that loveth me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him. . . . If a man love Me he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we

⁹ Gal. iv, 6.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. i, 8, 9.

will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”¹¹

The method in which the Divine Spirit works assurance in the heart of the believer lies beyond the range of discovery. Possibly at some crisis in experience the Spirit works directly to awaken the specific conviction of acceptance with God. But ordinarily a working in this form would not seem to be necessary. Living filial affections by their own virtue naturally evoke a spontaneous inference as to the relation of acceptance with God. The filial heart, in the outflow of its trust and love, can hardly be restrained from calling to God as Father. The great demand, therefore, for the enjoyment of assurance, as a standing fact in the experience of the believer, appears to be simply the possession, through the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, of living filial affections. One who has these affections need not wait for any mystic voice to assure him of his standing. In the earnest and trustful cry of his heart to the heavenly Father he already has the essential part of assurance.

¹¹ John xiv, 21, 23.

*V: Aids to Continued Progress toward the
Christian Ideal*

In considering things necessary or helpful to continued progress toward the Christian ideal—or to use a more technical term, things contributory to progressive sanctification—we need to recur to the conditions of beginning a Christian life. As has been seen, these are faith in the sense of a trustful self-committal to a Divine Person, repentance regarded as a turning away in the standing purpose from all recognized evil and imperfection in one's life, and evangelical obedience, or a readiness, as occasion arises, to carry out the principle of faith into a detailed fulfillment of the ethical and religious code of the gospel. These are not merely the conditions of starting toward the ideal; they are the foremost conditions of continuous progress up to the ideal itself, up to the goal of complete sanctification. One advances at the best rate by just cultivating the spirit in which he made a start. He does not need to trouble himself with any fine and subtle scheme for getting hold of the forces of the spiritual world. He has simply to go forward in the spirit of faith, penitence and obedience. These are the constant requisites.

It is worth while, however, to take note of two or three things either implicitly contained in them or accessory to their office.

We remark then, in the first place, that it is helpful to progress to keep up a vital sense of spiritual dependence. Personal effort is likely to be a hard striving when divorced from a sense of intimate connection with a gracious and all-powerful personality. It tends greatly to illuminate moral struggle if one can share in the sentiment which brought to the lips of the apostle the question, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Struggle may be heroic in one who is self-centered; that it may be in the best sense cheerful and victorious, there needs to be the consciousness of union with a Divine Helper.

A double aspect of truth needs here to be carefully respected. Strenuousness is most certainly to be cultivated. Religion must go out into energetic practical activity. As George Tyrrell tells us: "No will can be united to God's and built into the communion of saints that is not firmly set upon the overthrow of evil and the triumph of good through the length and the breadth of the earth." The strenuous will, however, needs to enter into copartnership with the Divine Ally in order

to reach the proper achievement, and this co-partnership is conditioned on a habit of full trustful self-delivery to that Ally. As an old Egyptian proverb puts the two sides of the demand: "The archer hitteth the target partly by pulling, partly by letting go; the boatman reacheth the landing partly by pulling, partly by letting go."

In the second place, it ministers to progress to take the mediation of Christ at its true practical value. An ambitious spirit may indeed think of making a direct flight to God, giving little or no heed to the instrumentality which is commended in the gospel. But the result is not likely, in the long run, to be of the best order. There is a danger in this procedure that the thought of God will lose much of its vitality through vagueness and generality. One will proceed more securely by looking very frequently to Christ, since He is the perfect guide to a sense of fellowship with the Father. The spirit of sonship dwelt in Him in ideal measure. To be in His company, therefore, is to be in contact with the spirit of sonship, to have vividly before the mind an authentic picture of the heavenly Father, and by natural consequence to gain the most home-like feeling in His presence that could by any

means be realized. There is also—to state a truth that will bear repetition—in companionship with Christ the great advantage that it never isolates one from his fellows. He never conducts to an absorption in God to the injury of a sympathetic connection with men. If He called Himself the Son of God, He called Himself also the Son of Man, and He showed by the most indubitable proofs that He was with men and for men. Thus while He leads near to God, He at the same time leads near to men, and enforces the brotherly relationship. Indeed it is one of the chief glories of Christianity that in the person of its Founder there is provided at once a bond of intimate fellowship with God and of sympathetic relation with men.

Again it ministers to progress toward the Christian ideal rightly to combine a habit of contemplation with practical activity. For both the one and the other the means at hand are not scanty. The themes of sacred thought supply abundant materials for a heavenly vision. It is only necessary that thought and imagination should take hold of them in order to make them a source of continual edification and inspiration. But contemplation divorced from practical activity makes the mere

dreamer. Its proper function is to give solace and incentive to the worker, to inspirit him by placing a glorious sky over his head or by surrounding him with a beautiful scene. Says the eloquent author of the epistle to the Hebrews: "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses let us run with patience the race set before us." Contemplation utilized to enforce patient endeavor is the thought of the exhortation.

Again a habit of utilizing very brief casual opportunities in one or another form of religious exercise can be made very serviceable in vitalizing the religious disposition. It commends itself as a perfectly unburdensome supplement to the stated seasons of worship and meditation. Much refreshment and incentive, for example, may be derived from the employment of chance moments through the day in intercessory prayer, petitions for specific individuals in whose welfare we are or ought to be interested. A habit of this kind cannot fail to work for heart enlargement. Objectively, too, it may be regarded, with perfect sobriety, as entitled to effect genuine results. By praying for others we put ourselves in a favorable position to receive suggestions of such ministries to them as may be best adapted to their needs.

Moreover it is safe to hold the general principle that whatever improves ourselves touches the world for good at some point.

Once more, in the employment of means of religious improvement, we pay due regard to a psychological law, when we give as little attention as possible to the aim at self-improvement, and as much as possible to the intrinsic excellence of the realities of religious contemplation, and to the worth of the definite objective ends which may be reached. Of course it is not possible, neither is it desirable, to ignore the former entirely. Some attention to our estate is necessary to direct the effort at its improvement. It is to be remembered, however, that religion is not best acquired by attempting to practice religion upon ourselves. To think about the heavenly Father, or about Christ, just to do ourselves good, is not the way to get the most good from such thinking. To do works of kindness for the sake of their reflex influence upon ourselves is not the most effective way to make dominant the kindly impulse in us. The vision of divine beauty, the excellence of fellowship and coöperatoin with God, should so commend themselves to our minds and hearts, that spontaneously we turn to them and seek them for their own sake. In like

manner the great needs of our fellows and the worthful fruits to them and to the world which are certain to come from our hearty response to the demands of their lives, should be the subjects of absorbing interest. The child does not do his best to gain a filial attitude toward the mother by simply writing it down as a duty to be attended to, a piece of self-improvement which is to be wrought out. Rather by thinking on the charm of the mother's love and care and on the insolvable debt of gratitude which he owes, is the fountain of finer feeling made to spring up within him. So in like manner let the Christian proceed in his striving for religious betterment. Let him keep in the foreground the great objective values.

CHAPTER VII: THE SOCIAL IDEAL OF CHRISTIANITY

I: The New Testament Terms Descriptive of the Social Ideal—The Kingdom and the Church

Even a casual reading of the Gospels must reveal the fact that a great social ideal is set forth in their teachings. Repeated mention is made of the "Kingdom of God." Many times the equivalent phrase, "Kingdom of heaven," is employed. Matthew uses the latter term almost uniformly. The conception contained under these terms appears in the words "Thy kingdom," which occur in the petition which the disciples were taught to address to the heavenly Father. Occasionally Christ described the kingdom from the standpoint of relation to Himself, speaking of it as "my kingdom." Three times only does the word "Church" occur in the Gospels, whereas the kingdom is mentioned one hundred and twelve times. In the Epistles, on the other hand, the ratio of use is decidedly in favor of the former term, that being used one hundred and twelve

times, while kingdom appears but twenty-nine times.

In some instances, it may be granted, the term kingdom is used in a way which is not directly suggestive of a social ideal. It is spoken of as something which the individual is to receive and to have within himself. But, on the other hand, mention is made of entering into the kingdom as though it were the kingdom which receives the individual, and not the individual the kingdom. The two ways of speaking, however, are not contradictory. It is precisely by enthroning in his own spirit the principles of the kingdom that a man comes into true association with the Head of the kingdom and with his fellow members in the kingdom. In this sense the kingdom must enter into him in order that he may enter into the kingdom; that is, he must receive the principles of the kingdom in order to enter the circle of the proper associations of the kingdom. In the thought of Christ the circle of associations was undoubtedly given no small emphasis. His prayer for the heart union of those who should obey the gospel call and His stress upon the law of mutual love and service show that He had in mind a great spiritual society, which in the tenor of its pure and intimate relationships

should be a fit antecedent of the society of heaven, a kingdom of heaven begun upon earth.

In what has been said it has been taken as undoubtedly true that Christ recognized an inner aspect of the kingdom. In this aspect the term connoted in His thought a gradually unfolding life, advancing after the method of a reality essentially ethical and spiritual. Some of His sayings, it is to be granted, seem to countenance the thought of the kingdom as being ushered in by the apocalyptic method, that is, through the sudden external crisis, the method of irresistible power. That in the report of His words full credit, not to say excessive credit, was given to any element of this kind to which He gave utterance, is quite certain, since the minds of the disciples, on the score of the education which they had received in later Judaism, had a strong predilection for apocalyptic representations. Christ may have given some place to current formulas in this line from conviction, as well as by way of accommodation in addressing an audience to which truth was much more accessible in pictorial form than in any other. What is quite certain is, that He greatly emphasized the kingdom as a present inward reality, advancing in the manner of an ethical or spiritual in-

terest. Many and varied sayings evince as much. Thus He implies that the kingdom is already present when He charges against the Pharisees: "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. . . . Ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter." The like implication goes with His approving response to the Scribe, "Thou are not far from the kingdom of God." Again, the kingdom is conceived as a present and spiritual reality when the condition for entrance is specified as the being converted and becoming as little children. Further the list of parables in which the kingdom is likened to the mysterious sprouting and growth of grain, to the development of a mustard seed into a large plant, and to the working of the minute substance of leaven through whole measures of meal, distinctly favors the thought of the kingdom as a present and gradually unfolding reality. Likewise the comparison of the kingdom to a treasure hid in the field, for which a man barter all his possessions, or to a goodly pearl which the merchantman values above his whole stock besides, manifestly makes the kingdom a present means of personal enrichment, an essentially spiritual

treasure. A like conception is indicated by the collocation of petitions in the Lord's prayer, implying, as it does, that the coming of the kingdom is identical with the doing of God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. Finally the sentence of Luke xvii, 20, 21, "The kingdom cometh not with observation, neither shall men say, Lo, here! or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you," is decidedly on the side of the spiritual as opposed to the apocalyptic sense of the kingdom. The whole list of passages,¹ it strikes us, powerfully sustains that sense. There is no denying that Christ gave a broad place to the thought of the kingdom as a present and spiritual reality, whatever other conception may have taken rank as accessory to this.

"So comprehensive a theme naturally provided for a variety of representations. Viewed as to its source and central principle, the kingdom is the realized moral rule of God; viewed as to the relations of its subjects, it is an ideal society. Regarded as a sum of spiritual goods which accompany or result from the realized rule of God, the kingdom can be spoken of as a treasure to be received; regarded as the domain where a divine and heavenly régime ob-

¹ Matt. xxi, 31, xxiii, 13; Mark xii, 34; Matt. xviii, 1-4; Mark iv, 26-29; Matt. xiii, 31-33, 44; Luke xvii, 20, 21.

tains, it can be described as a province or sphere which is to be entered. As already inaugurated and in process of development, the kingdom is here and now; as awaiting a great consummating stage it is yet to come. Obviously these various aspects need not be regarded as necessarily involving any contradiction.”²

The fact that the apostles spoke so infrequently of the kingdom, and so often of the Church, may be taken as a hint that they put into the latter term much of the meaning of the former. Both terms contemplate a renewed humanity. The proper subjects of the kingdom are those who have given an interior welcome to the principles of the kingdom. The proper members of the Church are those who in their fundamental disposition are prepared for a brotherly relation with one another. The one term refers more directly to the side of divine association and the other to the side of human association. But since a true relation to the kingly Father in heaven implies a brotherly relation to men, and a brotherly relation to men is most adequately grounded in a filial relation to God, we are led to much the same conception whether we use the term “Kingdom” or “Church.”

² The citation is from the author's “New Testament Theology” (pp. 75-79). The Macmillan Company, New York.

No doubt the word Church is more suggestive of a definite, tangible, concrete institution than is the word Kingdom. The one falls into association with place and time more readily than the other. Still it is possible, by considering the Church in its more interior and ideal sense, largely to overcome this difference. Taken in this sense the Church overpasses the limits of any visible organization. It is the brotherhood of Christ, the household of the regenerate, the whole company of those who confess the headship of Christ and the obligations of mutual love. Some of the members may be in one division and some in another. They may be distinguished by different ecclesiastical names. But in so far as they belong to Christ, and are devoted to the establishment of His righteous dominion over the hearts of men, they belong to the one great Church of Christ.

It is in this broad and somewhat ideal sense that we purpose to use the term Church. We mean by it the ethico-religious society which resulted from the ministry of Christ, and which has the great mission of establishing the practical dominion of Christ in the world—the mission of forming men into a spiritual household, wherein they shall be governed by the law of supreme love to God and of equal love to the

brother. We believe that it was a Church of this kind which Christ intended to found and which the apostles labored to establish.

Reference ought perhaps to be made in this connection to the "State," as another term connoting social relations. What is represented by that name received recognition in the New Testament. Christ's injunction, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and Paul's declaration, "The powers that be are ordained of God," imply the legitimacy of the State and the solemn obligation to respect its claims to allegiance. The subject, however, is not developed. No formal discussion of the nature of the State occurs. Neither are the topics which might be regarded as coming under the purview of the State given any specific treatment. Industrial schemes, as little as political, are broached or advocated. This is not saying that New Testament teaching has no bearing upon such themes. The warranted statement is that it is not given to the formal advocacy of theories in those domains. It addresses itself to them only through its ethico-religious principles. In all probability this is the medium through which oracles designed for a world-wide religion could work most satisfactorily.

II: The Relation of the Individual Christian to the Church

In the study of the subject of the Church one of the first questions to be suggested is the relation of the individual Christian to the fraternity which bears that name. Practically, it is quite obvious, there is a large measure of mutual dependence. The Church can have no existence save as there are individual Christians who have a mind to associate together. The individual Christian, on the other hand, lacks the best means of attaining and developing a Christian character save as there is a Church to persuade and instruct him. There is thus interdependence. However, a certain logical priority belongs to the individual Christian, since the Church has no absolute prerogative to make him a Christian, or to give to him that regenerate character which he must have in order to gain anything more than nominal membership. Even if it be supposed that the Church has a rite which works with such magical efficiency as to regenerate candidates who are too immature either to give or to withhold consent, the case will not be much altered. For, every one must concede that the Church cannot hold a person to the regenerate character for a

single hour after he comes to the point of moral and religious intelligence, aside from his own free choice and action. Ethical self-surrender to God consummates regeneration, inducts into a right relation with God, and lays a foundation for right relation with all God's children, that is, with the Church in its higher character as a spiritual household. This ethical deed may conceivably be consummated apart from all instrumentality of the Church, or as a purely personal transaction between the soul and its Maker. As thus conditioning his own regenerate character, the individual Christian occupies a position of logical priority to the Church. Only a company of regenerate individuals can constitute a true Church, and it rests ultimately with the individuals to determine whether they shall gain and keep the regenerate character.

The Church is third in the order of thought, God and the individual soul taking precedence. Nevertheless, Christianity makes large account of the Church. As the religion of love it could not do otherwise. Love has its sphere in fellowship. The ideal which it dictates is not a multitude of perfected individuals considered merely as individuals. It is rather a multitude of perfected individuals perfectly asso-

ciated together, each enriching the rest by the outflow of his sympathy and good-will, and enriched in turn by all. As a free personality and a candidate for uncompelled union in heart and will with God, the individual may condition his entrance into the spiritual brotherhood which we call the Church. But it is quite certain that in so far as he unites himself with God he cannot wish to separate himself from those whom he judges to be children of God. As we have had occasion to remark, true sonship toward God and a brotherly attitude toward men are things which Christianity does not separate. Genuine Christian character contains a vital incentive to fellowship and grows in the sphere of fellowship.

III: The Appropriate Relation between Church and State

The Church and State are manifestly separated in significance by a considerable interval. The former in its proper character has no definite territorial demarcation. It knows neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. Wherever a man responds in heart and life to God as revealed in Christ he appears in the Christian point of view as one of the spiritual brotherhood, by right a member

of the Church. The State, on the other hand, has a certain territorial jurisdiction. The dream of a universal empire or of a universal republic may indeed be entertained, but it is likely to remain a mere dream. To all practical minds the word "State" is one that involves distinct local associations.

Again, the Church differs from the State in its wider outlook. Contemplating man as an immortal being it consistently puts the main stress upon what makes for his good permanently, or in the world to come as well as in this, and subordinates his material interests to this high end. One or another form in which the Church clothes itself may be transient; but in idea, as being a spiritual brotherhood, it stands for an immortal society. The State, on the other hand, while by no means confining its view exclusively to the material interests of its subjects, does give to those interests a relatively large attention, and in general considers rather the demands of the temporal earthly community than the relations of men to an immortal brotherhood.

This antithesis does not of course imply that the one who directly serves the State necessarily renders less service to the immortal brotherhood than does the one who directly serves

the Church. The direct service of the former to the temporal secular society may be indirectly a most valuable service to the spiritual and immortal society, just as in turn, labor directly put forth for the latter may indirectly promote the best interests of the secular society. The contrast drawn involves no sort of estimate of the relative contribution rendered to the spiritual society by the ecclesiastic and the man of secular vocation respectively.

While differing in idea and purpose, the Church and the State have offices which are quite harmonious. Indeed the ideals which the Church in its true character seeks to instate, in so far as they are made actually potent in the minds of men, reënforce in them the motives for good citizenship. The Church thus contributes to the health and strength of the State. On the other side the State, so far as it secures an orderly, intelligent, and nobly ambitious society, prepares a favorable field for the cultivation of the ideals which it is the office of the Church to foster.

In consideration of this capability of mutual helpfulness, the normal relation between Church and State is evidently one of mutual friendliness. An informal moral alliance, or a tacit engagement of each to favor the welfare

of the other, so far as may be consistent with its own special vocation, ought to subsist between them. But more than this is of doubtful utility. A union or close alliance involves dangers for both sides. In case the State is strong and aggressive it exposes the Church to the hazard of losing a good part of its liberty and of falling into an unworthy spirit of clientship. On the other hand, if the Church is strong and ambitious there is a liability, on the basis of an intimate connection, that it should infringe to an injurious extent upon the province of the State. Ecclesiastical names and positions do not negate human nature in men, or guarantee that, if they have the opportunity, they will not add one increment of power to another up to the point of virtual dictatorship. Possibly special conditions of society might give a measure of justification to a close alliance of Church and State; but on the whole, it seems to be the lesson of history that such an alliance is mischievous. There is good reason to believe that the Church best serves itself and the State by not endeavoring to exercise, or directly to control, political functions, and that the State promotes its own interests, and those of the Church as well, by not essaying to manipulate religious functions.

Freedom for each in its own sphere, supplemented by mutual friendliness, the Church fostering intelligent devotion to the State, and the State giving to the Church that protection which is due to any approved association within its bounds—this, it seems to us, expresses the appropriate relation between the two.

The plea which has sometimes been made that the Church has a distinct primacy over the State, since it is the bearer of God's will, and the magistrate is bound not to resist that will, can be regarded as valid by those only who believe that a monopoly of the interpretation of the divine will has been given to a company of ecclesiastics, to the exclusion of the rest of the world. Men who believe that in practical matters a righteous and fair-minded magistrate may come as near to the mind of God as any other kind of official will not see any force in the plea under consideration. It is to be noticed also that a function of tuition and a prerogative of dictation are quite different things. The Church to the best of its discretion may leaven society with what it regards as sound deductions from gospel principles, and thus influence the administration of the State, without once assuming the formal right to control State policies. This form of influ-

ence is far less liable to provoke antagonisms than an attempt at direct interference, and in the long run is far better suited to forward any aims which the Church may legitimately pursue for the well-being of society.

IV: The Preëminence of the Ethico-Religious Character of the Church Over the Ceremonial Aspect

It is quite evident from the preceding discussion that the Church lives and moves and has its being in ethical and religious interests. It can appropriately be defined as an ethico-religious society, and it is abundantly worth while to emphasize the truth that it is that sort of a society, as distinguished from a ceremonial institute. By a ceremonial institute is not meant an organization which uses ceremonies in a symbolical or æsthetic way, much as metaphors and parables are used for the vivid presentation of truth. An essentially ethico-religious society can grant a very considerable license for the use of visible forms and transactions, so long as the function of these is understood to be simply that of imaging forth religious verities and commending them to those who would not be so fully accessible to a more intellectual form of address. Ceremonialism implies more than the use of

forms in this way. It denotes, at least in its more pronounced types, a stress upon outward rites as means for directly effectuating spiritual results, and as conditions indispensable, or next to indispensable, to any true standing in the divine kingdom. It assumes that salvation is dependent upon certain physical connections and performances, and not merely upon the response of the will and affections of the individual to the ethical and religious requirements of divine service and companionship. Ceremonialism thus defined, it must stoutly be maintained, is no part of the true conception of the Church. The Church is an ethico-religious society, not a ceremonial institute, not an association dependent on theurgy or physical magic.

This conclusion is supported in the first place by the rational thesis already advanced, that the individual as a sovereign moral personality gains the regenerate character, and is kept in it, by the unforced exercise of his own will. Nothing else in the universe can override that or take its place. The best that the Church can do is to instruct and persuade the individual and thereby assist him to that ethical self-surrender which is the open door to salvation. Ceremonies can effect no saving re-

sult apart from this self-surrender, and it is at least rationally impossible to figure how they can serve among efficient antecedents to the self-surrender except as one form, among others, of instruction and persuasion.

In the second place a legitimate stress upon the ethical nature of God is in favor of the ethico-religious conception of the Church as opposed to the ceremonial. What sort of conditions would an intensely ethical being impose except those intrinsically ethical, conditions addressed to the will, reason and affections of the individual! God surely cannot be conceived to put mere physical processes, or manipulations of a material medium, in the scale against ethical processes. The scorn which the old prophets heaped upon the sacrificial system of Israel, viewed as a substitute for the fulfillment of ethical requirements, may be regarded as most truly representing the mind of God. Indeed, it is nothing short of an absurdity to suppose that in His administration anything like the same practical importance can be attached to an external rite as belongs to such ethical exercises as repentance, faith, and love.

In the third place, the tenor of the New Testament decidedly legitimates the ethico-reli-

gious conception as contrasted with the ceremonial. It can truly be said that scarcely so much as a page of the New Testament is occupied with ceremonial prescription. Christ indicated briefly His wish that His disciples should employ bread and wine in an emblematic rite for the commemoration of His sacrificial death. An illustrative reference to baptism seems to occur in Christ's conversation with Nicodemus. In the total statement of the Master to the Jewish ruler the emphasis is plainly on the agency of the Spirit in the new birth. But, in order to elucidate to His inquirer the meaning of this birth, He refers to water, thereby indicating that being born of the Spirit signifies the experience of an inward cleansing. In one of the four Gospels a passing reference is made to the fact of baptism being administered by Christ's disciples.³ The rite at that stage, however, could hardly have had a distinctively Christian sense. Only in a single recorded sentence is it made to appear that Christ took pains to establish any general obligation respecting baptism.⁴ This is the whole sum of attention which He is known to have given to the ceremonies of the new dispensation. The discourse in the sixth chapter

³ John iii, 22, iv, 1, 2.

⁴ Matt. xxviii, 19.

of John's Gospel cannot properly be cited in behalf of a contrary conclusion. The reference in that chapter to partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ is a figurative way of inculcating the necessity of appropriating by faith His person and work in the whole extent of their religious significance. That no material transaction was contemplated by this language is unequivocally signified by the interpretation put upon it by Christ Himself: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are Spirit, and are life."

Ceremonial references are as infrequent in the Epistles as in the Gospels. Practical abuse at Corinth gave Paul the occasion for the single reference to the Lord's Supper which is contained in his writings. In the whole body of the Epistles there are scarcely more than a half dozen sentences which relate to the import of baptism. One or another of these sentences, it may be granted, seems to give that rite a certain association with regeneration. But only a limited significance can be assigned to that association, in consideration of two prominent facts. Baptism at that time was administered at once in connection with entrance upon the new life of Christianity, and so natur-

ally was given a close connection in thought with regeneration. It was a rite at once typical of regeneration, and in the sight of the company of believers practically coincident with its effectuation. Under such conditions it was not unnatural that, in energetic rhetorical discourse, baptism should occasionally have been spoken of as a rite of spiritual cleansing, though in strictness it rather typified than effected the cleansing. This is one fact to be noticed. The other fact is the very important one, that the New Testament is vastly remote from representing the essentially regenerate state as necessarily depending upon baptism. In some cases it connects its initiation with the ministry of the word. In the vast majority of instances it represents its effectuation as depending upon purely ethico-religious conditions, such as repentance and faith. In its dominant teaching the New Testament is true to Christ's condemnation of the Pharisaic exaggeration of ceremonial efficacy. It does not set aside the ultra-Judaic model merely for the purpose of putting another of the same kind, only christened with a new name, in its place. It proclaims a spiritual kingdom, an ethico-religious society, which is entered upon ethico-religious conditions—repentance, faith, obedi-

ence, love—and not on the basis of physical transactions. A readiness to fulfill the essential conditions may imply a willingness to meet such minor conditions as the rites which are suited to give visible expression to faith and to serve as a bond of fellowship. But no one is looking to the right basis of Christian character or standing when he is looking to external rites as opposed to the act and the habit of self-surrender and filial obedience to God as revealed in Christ. The Church cannot be turned into a ceremonial institute without contradicting the decided tenor of the New Testament.

In denying to ceremonies a chief importance, and in repudiating them as instruments of magical effects, we are remote from disparaging them in so far as they are adapted to stimulate to motives and activities of an ethical and religious nature. Truth may be pictured in rites as well as uttered in words. Such rites as baptism and the Lord's Supper give visible expression to the marvelous grace and love of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are properly regarded, therefore, as very useful and sacred.

V: The Liberty of the Church in Respect of Polity

If Christianity, as an ethico-religious system, is forbidden to place the chief emphasis upon ceremonies, in like manner it is forbidden to treat the question of polity or government as of the foremost importance. No one particular form of polity can be regarded as of the essence of the Church. This conclusion rests, in the first place, upon the rational principle that a mere form of association is in the nature of things of secondary consequence, and may properly vary to meet varying conditions. That men should be at heart children of God and ready for brotherly fellowship is the supreme demand for the subsistence of a Church. It applies to any other world as well as to this. But who will say that a particular form of Church government is thus of permanent necessity? Has any one the boldness to affirm that a college of cardinals, or a house of bishops, or an assembly or conference of delegates, is a necessity of heavenly society? But if any form of Church government may conceivably end before the Church ends, it is evidently not strictly of the essence of the Church. It may perhaps be the preferable form at a certain stage, but that fact would not necessarily se-

cure for it a superior claim in connection with some other stage, to say nothing about an exclusive right. In the sphere of civil government, according to a very wide consensus of opinion, respect must be had to the character of the subjects, and therefore no one form can be pronounced universally and unqualifiedly the best. The natural inference is that the same principle holds good of religious society. In short, it seems scarcely less appropriate, in a rational point of view, to make the title to true manhood depend on wearing a particular style of clothes, than to insist that a particular form of polity is necessary to the existence of the Church.

Concurring with the force of these rational grounds, we have a general historical consideration which amounts to a practical demonstration. For no considerable period has the Christian Church been under one unvarying polity. During long intervals different types have subsisted side by side over broad areas. Now will any one say that the fruits of Christian piety have been confined to the field of one special polity? The plain truth is that these fruits have not been limited to a fenced-in area. Under widely diverse forms of church government men have given indubitable signs

of having reached in their dominant disposition the high estate of children of God. An occasional individual may perhaps have the hardihood to deny this fact and to maintain that outside of certain ecclesiastical lines men live only a starved kind of spiritual life upon a moiety of uncovenanted grace. But broad-minded and well-informed men, whose vision is not shut in by Pharisaic mist, know that spiritual fruitage has not been limited to the area of one particular polity as opposed to that of others. We are therefore summoned by an overwhelming historical attestation to believe that a polity of a particular sort is not an essential of Christian society.

This conclusion is furthermore supported by specific data of early Christian history. It cannot be proved that Christ imposed anything like a definite polity or church constitution. While he placed under special training a select group of disciples, He trained them rather for a prophetic calling than for that of ecclesiastical magistrates. He educated them above all things to be missionary heralds of great religious facts and truths. No record indicates that He put so much as an outline of church constitution into their hands. He spoke indeed a few strong sentences relative to the

discharge of the responsibilities of religious leadership. But these sentences were only vivid and inspiring forms of the assurance that, in the great task of founding Christian society and gaining for it a standing room in the world, they should be effectually assisted by the Holy Spirit. There is absolutely no need to read into this half dozen sentences a specific form of church constitution made binding for all time. History shows that the apostles themselves did not discover in them any such meaning. They did not start out with any ready made scheme. Polity was unmistakably a matter of growth under their administration, new features being supplied as new exigencies called for them. At a given point the office of deacon was instituted, at least in germ. At another and unknown point elders were constituted a governing board in each local church. The New Testament does not show that episcopacy in the ordinary sense, that is, of individual headship over a specific territory, had been reached in the life-time of the apostles. But it was installed in Asia Minor near the beginning of the second century, and became within a few decades a common feature of the Church. Now a polity realized in this way of progressive advance can-

not reasonably be supposed to have been a matter of distinct original prescription. Neither is it necessary or practicable to take it as an authoritative model. If one seizes it at a particular point, and says, up to this stage it is authoritative, he can at once be met with the inquiry, How do you know that it is not left to the practical wisdom of the Church to bring in new adjustments, in order to meet new conditions? The discretion of the early Church accommodated its scheme to new exigencies. Who knows that the exigencies coming properly into consideration were all met by Christian society in the Græco-Roman world within the narrow limits of the apostolic age?

The conclusion that a specific type of polity is not of the essence of the Church does not exclude the opinion that one type is better fitted than another to be approved as the ultimate or ideal type. In the civil sphere there is good reason for believing that the form suited to the most advanced society is the one which contemplates men as a body of freemen having properly a voice in the management of matters of common concern. Analogy then favors the supposition that, for the advanced stages of religious society, the most suitable

form of government will be that which evokes and utilizes the interested coöperation of the whole body of intelligent Christians. It happens, too, that apostolic precedent seems to be largely in favor of this type. For while the apostles, in virtue of their special training and competency, were unavoidably intrusted with a species of leadership, they fulfilled this responsibility in the spirit of Peter's injunction to the elders, to rule not as lording it over their charges, but as making themselves examples to the flock. It was their custom, as is made quite apparent in the first chapters of the Book of Acts, to consult the full assembly of believers in matters of general interest; and in their estimate the whole body of the Christian people was ranked as a "holy priesthood," qualified "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."⁵

VI: *The Church Militant*

The primitive disciples needed all the encouragement which the great promises of their Master were suited to impart. How could they expect to succeed unless their ascended Lord should shower down might upon them

⁵ 1 Pet. ii, 5. For a somewhat elaborate exposition of historical and doctrinal matters pertinent to the theme of church government, the reader is referred to the author's "Sacerdotalism in the Nineteenth Century." The Abingdon Press, New York.

through the presence and energetic working of the Holy Spirit? The world into which they were sent forth was unfriendly, in large part fiercely hostile. To this unfriendly world they bore a message well calculated to elicit enmity. The world was proud; they preached the need of humility. The world was full of sensuality; they preached the demands of purity. The world was intemperately devoted to pleasure-seeking; they preached sobriety and self-restraint in the use of the lower enjoyments. The world was given to idolatry; they preached the need of turning to the worship and service of the true God. Their message was for the healing of the nations, a veritable water of life to any who were athirst for righteousness; but it was not wanted by the great mass of carnally-minded men. So the pathway of discipleship was often a pathway of martyrdom, and the witness for Jesus had to witness with his shed blood as well as with his spoken word.

With the spread of Christianity and the extension of its influence over large portions of the world, the storm of persecuting violence was for the larger part brought to an end. But that fact by no means implies that the Church has ceased, or can cease during the period of

earthly history, to be a militant Church, a Church engaged in arduous and continuous spiritual warfare. Its high aim is to unite men in a universal brotherhood wherein the law of supreme love to God and of equal love to the neighbor shall be fulfilled. In pursuing this aim it must encounter all the forces of rebellion in men's hearts against the higher law, all their selfishness, greed for wealth and lust of power, all their frivolity of spirit, lack of lofty aspiration, and tendency to fall under the dominion of enslaving appetite. Indeed the Church has no more difficult task to fulfill than that of keeping its own members true to the high standards set before them in the gospel. How easy it is for them to lapse into worldliness, to grow lukewarm in their zeal, and to forget the demands of patience, love, and brotherliness! Again and again has the Church been wounded and put to shame by those who should have been its glory and defense. A far-seeing mind might have anticipated that such would be the case; for, the task of lifting men out of sin into holiness, out of egoism into unselfish love, is the most difficult of all that are attempted beneath the skies, and we cannot well think of omnipotence itself being employed upon anything more difficult.

But if the Church must be militant it has still no occasion to deplore its lot. It is its glory that it is called to contend for the best and the highest, even for the dominion of truth, love, and righteousness. It is its crown of rejoicing that, taking the ages through, it is certain to contend successfully. He who has overcome the world leads on the hosts of His followers and guarantees at least a wide-reaching victory.

According to a confident expectation of many of our contemporaries, a grand expedient is pending for ushering in the triumphant reign of Christ in the earth. He is to come in personal distinct manifestation of Himself, and to accomplish speedily results which the ordinary agencies of evangelism can approximate with extreme slowness, if indeed they can make any headway at all toward them. The advocates of this doctrine of the "premillennial advent" differ from one another on various points. Those among them who can perhaps be credited with the largest significance, since they constitute an appreciable percentage in some of the larger communions, hold generally such propositions as the following: (1) The visible advent of Christ, though its date is not exactly determinable, is in all probabil-

ity near at hand. (2) The present world powers, as being essentially hostile to the reign of Christ, are to be displaced, and in their removal such measures of force will be employed as may be found necessary. (3) The Jews, reinstated in Palestine, and converted to the Christian faith, will serve as the special agents of Christ in executing His sovereign will. (4) The Kingdom thus set up and made practically triumphant will endure for a thousand years. At the close of this millennial period the order or régime of eternity will be installed.

Passing by other forms of Premillenarian or radical Adventist theory we will record a few comments upon the scheme inclusive of the propositions named. In the first place, the grounds cited for the conclusion that the second advent of Christ is close at hand are not convincing. Adventurous theories figure too largely in them to leave to them any degree of credibility. Thus there is an arbitrary dealing with chronological data, or with biblical statements that are accounted such, the motive being to secure such a long range to certain prophetic intimations that they can be made to apply to modern unfoldments. In the last century this end was secured, in numerous in-

stances, by construing chronological terms as symbolical. Thus "days" were interpreted as meaning years and "times" as denoting periods of three hundred and sixty years each. In recent years premillenarians, belonging to the constituency with which we are specially concerned, for the most part are not inclined, so far as we can judge, to render a positive approval to this exegetical device. They probably experience some difficulty in supposing that the biblical writers were so desperately enamored of word-puzzles that they used terms distant by a whole diameter from the meanings which they attached to them. Possibly they may have noticed that the Psalmist speaks of silver being purified "seven times," and did not care to attribute to him the fanciful notion of the metal being kept in the furnace twenty-five hundred and twenty years. At any rate they seem not generally to have embraced the exegetical device under consideration. But very largely they have taken up with a device for securing a long range to prophetic utterances which is about as much exposed to challenge as is that which most of them have hesitated to espouse. In order to extract from the books of Daniel and Revelation forecasts bearing on our own times, they take the lib-

erty to construe the ten kings which they mention as denoting ten kingdoms,⁶ which can be supposed to be perpetuated through many generations. The expedient may be ingenious, but what there is to recommend it besides the use to which it is put, no one can discover. Moreover, it encounters obstacles which may fitly be regarded as condemning it to down-right failure. As respects the Book of Daniel the possibility of the extended outlook has not been duly established by the exponents of Premillenarianism, and in all likelihood cannot be established. That possibility is excluded if by the fourth kingdom depicted in Daniel's prophecy was not meant the Roman Empire, but rather the Greek Empire of Alexander and his successors, which had already come to an end at the beginning of the Christian era. Now recent biblical criticism is strongly enlisted for this conclusion, and it certainly finds weighty support in the contents of the Book of Daniel. So a decidedly precarious status is given to any construction built upon this book relative to the era or the conditions of the second advent.

In case of the Book of Revelation the outlook is undoubtedly upon the Roman Empire. But the Revelator tells us himself that he

⁶ Dan. vii ; Rev. xiii, xvii.

writes of things shortly to come to pass. Reliable data respecting events to be introduced in our age he does not supply. He makes no attempt to carry his forecast beyond the Roman Empire, except in a very brief reference to the climax which ends earthly history. Now the Roman Empire has utterly disappeared, and the attempt to view it as conserved in ten kingdoms, into which it is supposed to have been broken up, plainly miscarries. What the Revelator mentions is not ten kingdoms, but ten kings. Moreover nobody can name with the slightest assurance any such group of kingdoms. And suppose it were possible to name them, it would be quite outside of rational warrant to count them as representative of anything like the world dominion for which the Roman Empire stood in the mind of the Revelator. They would be seen to constitute only a part of Europe (with a possible inclusion of a fraction of Western Asia). The great world of the Orient and the great world of the American Occident, which powerfully condition world affairs to-day, fall entirely outside their bounds. The plain truth is, we are in a world where forecasts relating to occurrences to take place on the theater of the Roman Empire can have no intelligible application, at least in any

literalistic sense. The Book of Revelation is out of the field, so far as data for determining the time of the advent are concerned.

The belief that Christ's visible coming is close at hand, which in some minds is founded on the increased migration of the Jews to Palestine and on current discussions about the provision of a home for them in that land, has no serious claim to consideration. A paltry embryonic Palestinian state in which the people of that race constitute only a minority, a state dependent for its initiation and continued existence on the friendly offices of Christian powers, is no sign of world-governing competency in the Jews; neither can it serve as a pledge that they will be set over the world, under the headship of Christ, except to those who are determined that omnipotence shall employ itself in fulfilling their fond speculations.

The conditions advise us to desist from attempts to fix, even approximately, the time of Christ's second coming. We are not likely to succeed in such a venture any better than did the Montanists of the second century.

Our second comment on the radical Adventist or Premillenarian scheme applies to the very tenuous foundation provided for the idea

of a visible reign of Christ upon the earth at any future period. Not a single unequivocal text can be cited from the New Testament in behalf of that idea. Only one text can be cited which may fairly be regarded as possibly inclosing the notion of the visible reign. That is found in Revelation xx, 4-6, where it is declared of a company of martyred saints that, by virtue of a resurrection, they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years. No specification is made as to the theater of this joint reign. Some reputable commentators think the Revelator had reference to a visible earthly theater; other commentators worthy of high respect are of the opinion that he designed to picture in dramatic form a rule having its seat in the heavenly sphere. From the terms employed it is impossible to reach a certain conclusion.

The New Testament taken as a whole furnishes no reliable basis for the doctrine of an earthly kingdom under the visible headship of Christ. On the contrary, it is positively adverse in its teaching. As an expert investigator of apocalyptic literature remarks: "In all other writers of the New Testament [aside from the Revelator] this doctrine is not only ignored, but its acceptance is made im-

possible in their definite doctrinal systems of the last things, for in these the second advent and the last judgment synchronize. Thus the millennium, or the reign of Christ for one thousand years on the present earth, or any other form of the temporary Messianic Kingdom, cannot be said to belong to the sphere of Christian doctrine.”⁷ To appeal to the Old Testament on this point will not help out the case for the Premillenarian. Whatever anticipations the old prophets may have entertained about a revived and flourishing Jewish Kingdom, they put forth no message relative to the descent of the Messiah from heaven to take personal visible direction of that kingdom.

Our third comment respects the Premillenarian thesis on the primacy which is to fall to the Jews in the government of the world during the millennial era. Where is the basis for that thesis, that radical assumption about the perpetuation of a most emphatic racial distinction under what we are accustomed to designate a Christian dispensation? The assumption certainly stands in amazing contrast with the import of Christ’s declaration: “Who-soever shall do the will of God, the same is my

⁷ R. H. Charles, “A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity,” p. 350.

brother, and sister, and mother.”⁸ It is also counter to His repeated utterances on the nature of the Kingdom of God, as an inner spiritual reality, rather than an external magistracy in the hands of either Jews or Gentiles. An attempt to invalidate the force of this series of texts by distinguishing between “kingdom of heaven” and “Kingdom of God,” and by applying the former term to the millennial kingdom under Jewish rulership, distinctly fails; for it is made plain to a demonstration by a comparison of passages that the distinction of terms was due to varying reports of identical utterances of Christ.

No less than the standpoint of Christ that of Paul is clearly contradicted by this intemperate exaltation of Jewish nationality. It squarely collides with his maxim that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian.⁹ Its tendency is to generate a counter current against his great achievement in behalf of the universality of Christianity. Paul indeed had hopes for the Jews, his kinsmen according to the flesh; but these simply amounted to the anticipation that in the mercy of God they would cease to furnish a chief theater for antichrist, and would join with the

⁸ Mark iii, 35.

⁹ Col. iii, 11.

Gentiles in a common faith on the crucified and risen Lord. To postulate for them an extraordinary world-wide regency was plainly foreign to his thought.

The Johannine writings—the fourth Gospel and the Epistles of John—fully match the Pauline in lack of support for the notion of a prospective enthronement of the Jews over this world. While great account is made in them of the valuable bequests from the Judaism of the past, they indicate an attitude of singular aloofness from contemporary Judaism, and assign to the Jewish people in relation to the future no significance whatever. That people is put out of sight as unmistakably as are Jerusalem and the temple in the picture which Christ gave to the woman of Samaria relative to the worship of the coming age.

Failing of any basis in the New Testament for his doctrine of the regnant position predestined to the Jews, the Premillenarian is logically driven to lean upon Old Testament data. No doubt the prophets gave expression to some glowing anticipations relative to a thriving Jewish Kingdom in the coming days. But is it necessary to look for a literal fulfillment of all that they penned in this vein? Premil-

lenarians themselves find it impossible to do that. For instance, for the major part they limit the kingdom set up at the second advent under the primacy of the Jews to one thousand years, whereas in various of the old prophecies the Israelite realm is represented as destined to stand forever.¹⁰ In the use of reasonable canons of interpretation some curtailment of the demand for a correspondence between prediction and the historical unfoldment is quite legitimate. In voicing their expectations the prophets had to depend largely upon materials supplied by their environment. It is enough to find that their expectations, if not exactly fulfilled, were not really belied. In fact it can truly be said that they were transcended. For Israel to be raised up from the apparent death of the Babylonish captivity, to serve as the household in which the Prince of Peace was born, and to have opportunity to transmit its precious accumulated riches for the furtherance of His spiritual rule over mankind—all this amounts to the fulfillment of a higher calling than falls to the lot of any ordinary kingdom of this world.

We are far from wishing to convey the impression that Premillenarians are all com-

¹⁰ Dan. ii, 44 ; Ezek. xxxvii, 24, 25.

mitted to equally emphatic views on the extraordinary importance, the inalienable primacy of the Jews in relation to the divine kingdom in this world. What it is permissible to say is, that their scheme at the extreme makes Christianity only a comparatively empty interlude between two stages of Judaism, and turns God Most High into an omnipotent Judaizer.

Our final comment is in expression of the conviction that the Premillenarian scheme unduly exalts the efficacy of agencies essentially physical in their nature. It proclaims the impotency of the preaching of the gospel to convert the world. In face of Christ's own declaration that it was expedient for Him to go away, in order that His cause might be advanced through the more abundant working of the Holy Spirit, it asserts that, apart from His return and visible rule, the prospect for the Kingdom of God, or the triumph of Christianity, is hopeless. To thus exalt instrumentalities of an external kind is below the plane of the New Testament, and is without discoverable warrant anywhere. History has not indicated that physical might and display are potent to accomplish spiritual transformations.

We deeply respect the earnest piety of a

large proportion of present-day Premillenarians. But to give countenance to their scheme would contradict the interpretation of Christianity which permeates this volume. The Church militant will do wisely to expect to advance the Kingdom of God by using, in co-operation with the spiritually present Christ, such means as the preaching and practice of the holy truths of the gospel.

VII: The Great Events Preparatory to the Era of the Church Triumphant

The two events which stand out most prominently in the biblical representation are the resurrection and the judgment. Of the former the most detailed treatment is supplied by Paul's discourse in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Here the resurrection is represented as an event coëxtensive with at least the whole company of the righteous dead, occurring at a special era, and investing its subjects with bodies of a higher type than those formerly possessed, bodies so well adapted to the needs of spirits that they may be styled spiritual bodies, though not such in strictness. The apostle makes his statements apparently with dogmatic confidence. It has been surmised, however, by some commentators that,

shortly after writing down this epitome of his belief, he changed his view on one prominent point, and came to hold that the resurrection, instead of occurring for men generally at a given era, in immediate proximity with the close of the dispensation, takes place shortly after death for each individual. The ground for this inference is the language used in Second Corinthians v, 1-4, where the apostle speaks of his longing to be clothed upon with his house from heaven, as opposed to remaining unclothed, or in a disembodied state. The form of statement can suggest that death was expected to be followed speedily by an investment of the spirit with a new body. However, in all probability that was not Paul's thought. In his vivid anticipation he passes over the interval to be spent in the intermediate state, which indeed he had no means of measuring and was at liberty to rate as very brief. Later texts from his hand imply that he still entertained the supposition of a general resurrection at a particular era.¹¹

It was noticed elsewhere that some of the New Testament references to the resurrection might be understood as denoting simply the transference of the dead to an estate of vital

¹¹ Phil. iii, 20, 21. See also 2 Tim. ii, 18.

immortality, and not an investment with bodies. But the implication is that the latter conception prevailed in the primitive Christian community. The subject as a whole is one upon which minute dogmatic specification is not appropriate. It incloses a prophecy of a great good, the precise nature of which must be left to future discovery.

The great final judgment is a theme which readily lends itself to dramatic representation. It is in this practically effective form that it is depicted in the Scriptures. The terms employed are those congenial to the religious imagination. The basal truth to be elicited from them is the certain consummation of the judicial process which is going on through the ages, the ultimate complete adjustment between lot on the one hand and character and conduct on the other. Every man shall infallibly reach his own proper place—that is the lesson of the judgment scene.

In conformity with prophetic terminology, the penalty falling upon those unable to meet the judgment tests is sometimes represented as a casting forth into darkness and fire. In the use of such imagery there was probably no other intention than to emphasize the extrem-

ity of the loss incurred. It would be no real trespass, therefore, against biblical authority to give full scope to the rational consideration that extirpation of moral and religious sensibility is the essential and truly dreadful penalty of persistent misdoing. Indeed this very principle of retribution may be regarded as implied in this declaration from Christ: "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."¹²

By parity of reasoning the great reward of those favored with an approving sentence is perfection of moral and religious sensibility, fullness of all the elements of a rich and satisfying inner experience. Heaven is a name for the estate wherein all fellowship, service, and activity are completely dominated by love. To one, however, who enthrones this point of view large liberty may fitly be granted in painting accessory features. For the great mass of people the picturesque is capable of fulfilling a useful office. Therefore many sentences in the Book of Revelation carry a beneficent message. Like strains of celestial music they descend age after age upon the hearts of those who feel deeply the burdens and troubles of life in its earthly environment.

¹² Mark iv, 25.

CHAPTER VIII: THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRISTIANITY AS RESPECTS A RIGHTFUL CLAIM TO UNIVERSALITY AND FINALITY

The grounds of faith in the title of Christianity to universality and finality have been in very large part indicated in the preceding chapters. In relation to some of these grounds there is very little call for further exposition. It will be appropriate, however, even at the expense of a slight measure of repetition, to award a mention even to these, in order that the reader may have under his hand a compact statement of the whole list of important data which warrant the heading given to this closing discussion. Our task is to set forth these data as economically as may be feasible.

I: A Very Unique and Significant Antecedent

The Old Testament cannot fairly be described in terms less emphatic. In manifold ways it placed a full treasury at the disposal of Christianity. Its ample list of wise and

vividly expressed precepts on the conduct of life, its dramatic presentation of lessons in morals through a long series of stirring historical scenes, its wonderfully rich and varied psalmody—these, along with much else, were invaluable contributions to the later religion. The crowning bequest, however, can be summed up in a single phrase, *ethical monotheism*. From no other quarter could this indispensable foundation have been derived. Monotheism elsewhere, if it had any formal acknowledgment, was compromised more or less by the coëxistence of polytheistic worships, also by dualistic or pantheistic conceptions, and was marred as to its ethical character by the wide scope given to magic. A pure, lofty, and thoroughly moralized monotheism it was the high office of the Hebrew people to fashion.

Other religions have had antecedents by which they have profited; but it is quite safe to say that in genuine religious potency they were not comparable to the Old Testament in its relation to Christianity. Possibly it might be imagined that Mohammedanism, as being posterior in origin to Christianity as well as to Judaism, was favored with peculiarly rich and extensive antecedents. Indeed, advocates of Bahaism, that recent offshoot from Moham-

medanism, have in effect expressed this judgment. But they proceed on very mistaken premises. Mohammed never had any first-hand or adequate acquaintance with either Judaism or Christianity. Neither he nor those who followed him made a real beginning toward bringing their religion into organic connection with that which emanated from Jesus Christ. Instead of going forward on that basis, they fell behind even the outcome of the Jewish dispensation. The simple indisputable fact is that the temporal posteriority, while taken advantage of to make sundry borrowings, was not utilized with the care or understanding requisite to enable Mohammedanism to approximate to the plane of the antecedent religions.

Now what does the lot of Christianity in being dowered with this exceptional inheritance import? Is it to be presumed that it simply happened to be favored with the marvelous background supplied by the Old Testament dispensation? The warrantable inference, it strikes us, is that the arrangement was the product of design, that God wanted to prepare the way for the extraordinary Messenger of Truth who was to come in the fullness of time.

In laying the maximum stress upon the Old

Testament antecedent of Christianity, it has not been designed to intimate that the historic evolution in other quarters contributed nothing to the New Testament religion. Our contention is that materials from elsewhere were distinctly subordinate to those which were furnished by the Hebraic dispensation. Neither the Græco-Oriental compound embodied in the Mystery Religions nor any other religious product anterior to the days of Jesus and the apostles is to be compared with the Old Testament as a source of New Testament religion.¹

II: Incomparable Realization of the Union of the Ideal and the Historical

It has been noticed that the union of the ideal and the real in a historic personality is a requisite for the most efficient religion, and that Christianity claims to possess in its Founder this requisite.

The claim is exceptional. In no one of the ethnic systems can a proper parallel be found. The founder of one or another of these systems, it is true, may have been idealized at an epoch comparatively distant from that of his place in history. But no assumption of an im-

¹For a compact exposition of the mystery religions and their bearing on the New Testament content, the reader is referred to the author's little book, "The Mystery Religions and the New Testament." The Abingdon Press, New York.

maculate character and career appears in their earlier oracles, and the validity of the systems is not made dependent upon such an assumption. Mohammed made no claim to have lived a perfect life; neither was such a claim made for him by his early followers. Moreover the record proves that he was guilty of downright faults. Not to mention other instances, the compromise which he made for a brief interval with the Meccan idolatry cannot possibly be rated as anything else than a culpable misstep. Gautama started out in ignorance of the true way, and acquired, in his own opinion, ability to teach that way as the result of a discovery made in his maturer years. That he was, or needed to be for the discharge of his vocation, an example of a sinless career was no tenet of original Buddhism. Primitive Confucianism and primitive Zoroastrianism were equally remote from asserting such a tenet in behalf of their founders. A genuine counterpart to the standpoint of primitive Christianity is not to be found in any of these domains. The undoubting conviction stamped upon the apostolic literature, and so reflecting the tone of the preaching that followed close upon the crucifixion—that in Christ the pure ideal of

character and conduct was enshrined—stands out as an unparalleled fact in history.

Proof that this lofty claim was actually fulfilled in Christ cannot, of course, be furnished in the form of direct demonstration, since sinless perfection reaches too deep to be discoverable by ordinary means of observation. The most that can be expected is such a cumulation of indirect evidences as may serve as a proper basis of rational certitude. These we have reviewed (Chapter III) and found not to be scanty, so that on this score we may with sobriety credit to Christianity an enormous preeminence.

III: Exceptional Prestige and Authority on the Score of the Transcendent Personality of the Founder

Under the preceding topic the whole emphasis was given to the unique distinction which pertains to Christianity through the exemplification of the ideal of sinless perfection in the person of Christ. No reference was made to any endowment transcending human measures. It needs to be remembered, however, that the stainless life and character of Christ hold no indifferent relation to the proof of His transcendent nature and work. If He

was unique to that extent, we are under practical compulsion to regard His uniqueness as reaching to a still higher plane. He who embodied the moral ideal, whose unstained spirit must have been singularly open to the higher realm of truth and reality, cannot be denied a peculiar competency to render authentic testimony respecting Himself. Now that testimony makes for the conclusion that He was, and knew Himself to be, the Son of God in a transcendent sense. No other induction can be derived from the Gospels, even from the Synoptical Gospels, as we have taken pains to show (Chapter IV), to say nothing about the Johannine version of the life story of Christ.

The very pronounced bearing of this truth of Christ's transcendent or divine sonship on the preëminence and finality of Christianity cannot be challenged. No ethnic system claims any such distinction for its founder, unless it be in narratives which historical criticism stamps as sheer mythology. Good credentials for the actual possession of the distinction on the part of Christianity are excellent proof that it can never be superseded. Doubtless the expression of its principles which is given in one age may be improved upon in the next. But no historic personage

can outrank the Son of God, and the religion which has Him for its personal center must be regarded as in its characteristic teachings thoroughly authoritative.

IV: Inclusion of Every Prominent Excellence Discoverable in the Ethnic Systems

If we take these systems as they have been sketched (Chapter I), and make full account of their best traits, we shall find it difficult, or rather impossible, to convict Christianity of falling short at any point. The best which they are able to bring forward is represented, in at least equal measure, within its ample content. So obvious is this fact that a very brief list of illustrations will suffice. Beginning with Mohammedanism we may specify as its most commendable feature the solemnity and force with which it depicts the majestic sovereignty of God and the need of unqualified surrender thereto. The Koran contains passages which worthily accentuate this order of truth. Nevertheless the Christian finds no occasion to turn from his own oracles when he seeks grounds for an overmastering impression of divine sovereignty and of human obligation to submission. In the writings of prophets and psalmists, as also in certain lofty

strains of the New Testament, he finds more than an equivalent to the Mohammedan tribute to the inexpressible greatness and absolute authority of God. Furthermore he cannot fail to notice the high distinction of his own religion in joining with the given aspect of truth an ample declaration of a complementary aspect. Notwithstanding a frequent formal mention of the mercy of God, the Koran, as has been observed, is comparatively empty in respect of the delineation of this side of the divine nature and administration. The warmly colored picture of the paternal character of God, which is a recurring feature in the Christian revelation, is wanting. In the Mohammedan outlook the mountain chain, symbolical of God's might and sovereignty, stands cold and somber under an unlighted sky. To the vision of the Christian the mountain chain is set aglow by the warm and brilliant rays of the risen sun.

Glancing next at Zoroastrianism we are warranted to select as its most praiseworthy feature the emphasis it placed upon the antithesis between the morally good and the morally evil. It was very much to its credit that it set before its votaries the ideal of life as an earnest militant struggle for the triumph of

the principles and powers of righteousness in the world over their insistent foes. It is not apparent, however, that it can claim on this score an appreciation which is not due in at least equal degree to Christianity. Does not the latter reach the very acme of intensity in its summons to unrelenting warfare against all evil intrenched in the heart of the individual? Does it not also make the kingdom of God, the perfect rule of righteousness, the most worthwhile thing in view, the great object of prayer and effort? Surely the summons to moral conflict was never sounded forth in more emphatic and imperative terms than those employed by Christ and the apostles. No deficit along this line can be charged against Christianity. No less than Zoroastrianism it stresses the moral conflict, and it has a clear advantage in the better basis which it provides for the ethical interest by its avoidance of the notion of a primal dualism.

The need of comparison with Buddhism is suggested in particular by the exemplary stress which it placed upon the duty of universal benevolence. As has been indicated, this missionary religion gave expression to some very beautiful and worthy sayings on the obligation to unstinted sympathy and

kindness. It is fair to urge, nevertheless, that Christianity has no cause of abashment in the presence of this phase of Buddhistic teaching. Observe the force of Christ's injunction to love even the enemy, the import of the parable which He uttered respecting the good Samaritan, the example of His marvelous self-devotement in going to the cross for the unworthy, the logical implications of Paul's lofty strain on the primacy of love, the far-reaching significance of the great Johannine declaration that God is love. Who that reviews this line of New Testament content can think of Christianity as being outranked by any rival as respects deeply founding and effectually urging the duty of universal benevolence? In its maxims it is not at all below the plane of Buddhism, and it has the great relative advantage that it affords in its ideal of man, as the subject of a full and rounded life in an imperishable kingdom, a consistent basis for enforcing benevolent interest in one's fellows. Buddhism cannot claim to possess that basis. In representing the complete cessation of desire as the ideal consummation for the individual, it virtually stamps the extinction of benevolent concern for others as something quite normal, as something indeed distinctive

of those who have been made perfect. Through this breach of self-consistency Buddhism unmistakably falls below Christianity as an exponent of the principle of universal benevolence.

Any further specimen of an excellence in an ethnic system which affords any real occasion of considering the relative merits of Christianity is not readily suggested. It may not be quite superfluous, however, to mention the doctrine of divine immanence as taught by Brahmanism, whether in its earlier or its later history. This doctrine, it is to be admitted, stands for a truth which must be given a prominent place in any rounded system of religion, and the extent to which it has prevailed in India furnishes no mean tribute to the vitality of the religious consciousness of the Hindu people. It is not to their discredit that they have been disposed to think of God as all in all. The ground of criticism lies in the failure to give due place to the complementary truths relative to the transcendence of God and the reality of men as true agents. Through a too exclusive stress on the immanence of God they left no place to coexistent reality, and gravitated into a world-denying pantheism. Christianity illustrates here, as in other con-

nections, its superiority, in that it gives a due recognition to complementary truths. It greatly emphasizes the divine immanence, the fact that in God we live and move and have our being. At the same time it refuses to sink God in the world, or to make His being simply co-extensive with the world, claiming for the latter a real though dependent existence.

The outcome of the illustrative comparisons which have been made is to enforce the conviction that Christianity is large and symmetrical enough in its doctrinal content to give a proportionate place to all the distinctive excellences which are discoverable in the ethnic systems. That this feature strongly supports the claim to finality is quite evident.

V: Inculcation of the True Ideal on the Relation between Morality and Religion

To harmoniously relate these two great interests and to secure to each its appropriate province is a task of exceeding difficulty. Numberless pages of religious history show how one or the other interest has been trespassed against. In the less developed religions generally a very imperfect adjustment has had place. The judgment sometimes expressed that in the primitive faiths religion and

morality were given no connection whatever we find occasion to repudiate. It is true, nevertheless, that the association between them was subject to much obscurity and mutilation. The extent to which belief in the efficacy of magic insinuated itself into the religious sphere had a deleterious effect upon the interests of morality, as conditioning well-being not upon character and conduct, but upon arbitrary and non-moral, not to say immoral, shifts. Even in the more developed ethnic systems the scope awarded to magic has often impaired the supremacy of the ethical point of view. The ancient Egyptian and Babylonian religions furnish illustration. Along with magic an exaggerated ceremonialism—which indeed always incorporates much of the magical element—has not infrequently tended to qualify the imperativeness of moral demands. Of this development Brahmanism, as we have seen, especially in its pre-Buddhistic period, afforded a notable example in that it made the gods themselves dependent upon the sacrificial system, and contradicted its more spiritual maxims by a line of declarations which imply that ceremonial observances may compensate even for serious faults in con-

duct. Thus in numerous instances the moral interest has been greatly compromised.

On the other hand, we find in the ethnic systems examples of a combination between morality and religion quite decidedly exposed to criticism, in that the province of religion is abnormally curtailed. Confucianism and original Buddhism are exposed to this stricture. The former accords but a cold recognition to the objects of religious veneration, and lays a preponderant stress upon a rather prosaic type of moralism. The latter took so little account of the agency of the gods as practically to ignore them, and concentrated emphasis upon a moralism of a genial and mystical type. In both religions the deficit on the religious side was too great not to enforce compensations of one or another kind in the later developments.

A glance at other ethnic systems would only add to the evidence that an ideal adjustment of the relations between morality and religion is not discoverable in that range. For that adjustment we must turn to Christianity. Of course it is not meant to be asserted that throughout its history Christianity has presented a perfect model of the union of morality and religion. That would be vastly too much

to say. What can be asserted is that in the spirit and teaching of the Founder morality and religion appear inseparably conjoined and receive each an ideal measure of emphasis. The model in its rounded perfection is there set before the ages, as has been shown at some length (Chapter III). The possession of this feature by Christianity evidently secures for it an extraordinary claim to preëminence.

VI: The Upholding of a Lofty Ideal of Spiritual Sonship

Between the servile and the filial disposition, between working for wages and devotement to worthy tasks through the simple constraint of a holy affection, there is a wide interval. Religion at its best cannot fail to award an emphatic preference to the filial ideal as against the servile. That the choice of Christianity is most heartily and distinctly awarded to the former is not open to any fair question. Doubtless it is true that in the Christian oracles not a little is said about the rewards which await the faithful. But declarations of this order are to be understood in connection with the New Testament system. The rewards held forth are rewards of congruity, the results

to which conduct and character fitly go forward in a well-ordered economy. They are neither bestowed by the Lord in the spirit of a paymaster, nor received in the temper of the mere servant working for hire. The rewarder is the heavenly Father, who in His bestowments takes account of receptivity rather than of desert in any legal sense; and the recipient is the child who recognizes in all that he receives tokens of fatherly goodness. According to the declaration of Christ men can enter the kingdom of heaven only by becoming as little children; and logically continuance in the kingdom and participation in its riches must be regarded as dependent on a continuous exemplification of the disposition which secured admission.

The superiority which Christianity exhibits on this theme is far from being simply that of formal teaching. To repeat a truth which has already been emphasized, a unique basis for a religion of sonship was supplied in the extraordinary self-consciousness of Christ, His sun-clear, radiant sense of a filial relation to the Father.

*VII: The Making Room for Normal Emphasis on
Service to the Present Age Alongside of Serious
Regard for the World to Come*

That an emphatic strain is contained in the Bible relative to the interests of the world to come is undeniable. To some it may seem that this strain is thoroughly dominant and leaves but little scope for emphasis on the duty of making the most of this present world for one's self and one's fellows. This judgment, however, is properly subject to modification. Two prominent considerations can be urged for the conclusion that a religion founded on the Bible can and ought to adopt a congenial attitude toward all true interests of this world. In the first place biblical teaching strongly commends the life of industry and thrift. One has but to glance into the wisdom literature of the Old Testament to get a vivid impression of the scorn with which it is permeated for the sluggard. In the New Testament the demand for diligence in business may be put less rhetorically, but it is urged no less earnestly. Paul reminds his disciples that the enthusiasms of a new-found religious experience afford no valid ground for forsaking the calling in which one was brought up. According to the testi-

mony of the Pastoral Epistles he denounces the believer who neglects to provide suitably for his household as a virtual denier of the faith and worse than an infidel. With all earnestness he inculcates the work habit, and goes so far as to prescribe, "If a man will not work, neither let him eat."²

In the second place, the Bible, along with this insistence upon work, promulgates with vigor the obligation to whole-hearted ungrudging benevolence. Now put these two things together, the prescription of the work habit and the inculcation of universal benevolence, and you have a sufficient basis for worldly enterprise. Every enterprise which sober judgment can sanction as being on the whole for the good of men appears in the light of biblical authority not only permissible, but obligatory. It would be no trespass against that authority to put into the primitive command to *subdue the earth* the widest meaning which the most ambitious advocates of the duty of utilizing natural forces could wish, in the exercise of a far-seeing wisdom, to have put into it.

But what about the biblical emphasis on regard for the world to come? What about

² See 1 Cor., vii, 20; 1 Tim. v, 8; Eph. iv, 28; 1 Thess. iv, 11; 2 Thess. iii, 10.

the injunction to lay up treasure in heaven? Is not this aspect of the Christian teaching in conflict with the purpose and endeavor to make the most of this world? Possibly in conflict with one or another plan for making the most of this world, but not in conflict with a wisely-devised plan. The most good cannot be gotten out of this world by the one who is swallowed up in purely earthly interests. Man cannot live by bread alone; his capacious spirit requires other aliment for health and satisfaction. Complete absorption in material enterprise is condemned to go on to disappointment. It cramps personality, whereas enlargement of personality is ever the condition of real and lasting gain. In the long run citizenship in this world can come to its best only by being linked with citizenship in a higher world. Doubtless it is possible to neglect the near at hand through a too exclusive attention to that which is above and beyond. But this is only saying that it is possible to give insufficient heed to the biblical requisition for work, thrift, world-subduing enterprise. In the ordering of life which the biblical religion approves the interest near at hand is supplemented rather than excluded by the transcendent interest. Throughout the normal career the latter works

with the former, curbing excess and imparting added significance. Indeed the ideal consummation is that the eternal should be woven into the temporal, such dispositions, affections, aspirations, and habits of thought being developed amid present engagements as must be of prime value always and in any world. To use the Johannine form of description, the ideal is an eternal life begun in the present, a life born from above as respects its inner principle, and fitted to go right on in enlarging beauty and strength in the world to come.

We see, then, that Christianity judged by the full sum of its teaching, is truly a religion of two worlds. It harmonizes respect for the present with a due contemplation of the immortal life.

VIII: The Granting of a Large Range for Continuous Progress

A religion which annexes to its underlying principles a great number of specific rules, and stamps these as being of divine authority, prepares for itself very uncomfortable and injurious restrictions. There are conditions in the civilization of one age which are not repeated in that of another age. Accordingly a detailed set of rules shaped according to the

conditions prevailing at the time of its promulgation is likely to collide at one point or another with later developments of an advancing civilization. So, for example, the Koran was made to give its sanction to features of a social order which a later generation must needs challenge, or else suffer rebuke for a culpable backwardness. Christianity avoids a dilemma of this sort, as being rather a religion of principles than of specific rules. Possibly a few of the apostolic prescriptions had for the primitive Christian age a pertinency which does not belong to them in this century. Such, for instance, in the opinion of many, is Paul's injunction respecting the silence of women in the churches, an injunction having its motive very largely in the doubtful reputation attaching to women, claiming license to speak in public in the contemporary Greek communities. But such prescriptions are so exceptional and of such subordinate import that they furnish no appreciable ground of embarrassment, except on a plan of interpretation unduly narrow and technical. In case of the particular rule adduced from Paul, it is enough to stress his broad conception of the abrogation of artificial distinctions among those who belong to Christ. Through his stal-

wart assertion of that conception the apostle himself furnishes ample ground for the modification of his own rule. By the evidence of history Christianity is a religion for every age. Its fundamental principles are on a plane which no civilization can transcend, and it leaves open a wide field for the application of those principles to any conditions which may be reached in the course of human progress.

*IX: The Ability to Meet in all Essential Respects
the Demands of the Philosophical Ideal
of Religion*

If place be made for the conviction that revelation furnishes a real contribution to the knowledge of religious verities, it follows as a matter of ready inference that it may authenticate some truths which philosophy in the use of its own resources may not be qualified confidently to affirm. The most that can be expected of a philosophy as respects harmonious relations with a religion is that the former should not find it necessary to challenge any of the characteristic tenets of the latter, and should be able heartily to approve its fundamental views of God, of man, and of the proper interrelations of God and man.

As was noticed, in the revelation, which

serves as the historical basis of Christianity, such views are suggested on the transcendence of God as are quite on a level with the best speculative thought of any age. At the same time a very emphatic conception of the immanence of God in the creaturely universe is given vivid expression within the compass of the biblical writings. In the combination of the two points of view a safeguard is provided against the impairment of the religious interest by the intrusion of either deistic or pantheistic notions. On the ethical side the Christian doctrine of God is in like manner comprehensive and complete. Stressing both divine righteousness and divine love to the utmost, it supplies the necessary basis for fostering at once the sense of the demerit of sin and a salutary confidence in the readiness of God to receive into favor and fellowship anyone who will make earnest suit for His grace. To the lofty views inherited from the ethical monotheism of the Old Testament it adds the unrivaled picture of paternal goodness which was native to the illuminated consciousness of Jesus Christ. In short, Christianity puts such a content into the idea of God that it is not possible to imagine any real ground of dissent on the part of a wide-visioned philosophy.

The essential aspects of the Christian view of man and of his appropriate relations to God in like manner invite philosophic approval. As a mirror of human nature the oracles of Christianity are marvelously efficacious. What better can a philosophy that takes sober account of the facts of human history do than to formulate its conclusions in line with the biblical picture of man, bringing out on the one hand into clear light the things that make for his humiliation and shame, and on the other hand the things which testify to his greatness and glory? What better, too, can philosophy do than to accept as the ideal consummation for man the realization of a spiritual sonship, begun in the present and flowering in perfection through the endless years of an immortal life? On the Christian ideal of either God or man genuine philosophical thinking—we have good ground for believing—can never bring any shadow of a disparaging judgment.

As regards the finality of Christianity, it is possible to urge that the evidences which have been presented may prove the pre-eminence of this religion over all others up to date, without excluding the supposition that it

may yet be surpassed and superseded. In response to this objection it is to be said, in the first place, that rational grounds for faith in the transcendent sonship of Christ are rational grounds for faith in the finality of the religion to which He is central. In the second place it can be contended that it is a strange mark of discretion to be anticipating a substitute for a religion which embraces, as does Christianity, a full group of the highest conceivable excellences.

While sustaining the rightful title of Christianity to universality, we have not found warrant for claiming that on this earthly stage it will ever actually secure complete dominion. Men are won to be true subjects of religion only with their free consent, and persuasions, however potent, are not invincible. What can be said is, that it is rational to believe that in the course of the ages a glorious ascendancy will accrue to Christianity. Indeed, vital faith cannot well anticipate anything less. It is under compulsion to look forward to the time when the Christ, who bore so fully the burden of this world's sorrow and sin, "shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

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